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Humanitarian parsimony in Sudan : The Bahr Al-Ghazal famine of 1998

HUMANITARIAN PARSIMONY IN SUDAN: THE BAHR AL-GHAZAL FAMINE OF 1998

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ABSTRACT

In 1998 the region of Bahr al-Ghazal in southern Sudan was the site of a famine which killed tens of thousands of people. This thesis asks whether much of the suffering and death can fairly be attributed to a failure of the traditional donor states to supply enough timely humanitarian aid. It finds that much can. Despite the presence of a long-established relief programme under the UN – Operation Lifeline Sudan – and plenty of information about a gulf between emerging needs and available resources, the donors delayed making major commitments until the end of April 1998, by which time it was too late to avoid catastrophe.

This conclusion is reached through a uniquely comprehensive piecing-together of evidence about the progress of the famine and the aid response in the field, and a chronological analysis of famine warnings, aid donations and attempts to gain humanitarian access. New connections are made with liberal states' geo-strategic concerns about Sudan, and the agenda of aid coherence.

The thesis brings to view a significant pattern of dysfunction in the production and use of information about humanitarian needs. It shows how ideas of humanitarian ethics, managerial competence and technical expertise were often implicated in making needs information reflect donor parsimony, and in making the information system flexible enough to allow donors to follow partisan motives in their funding decisions. These findings are of considerable importance in view of the growth of what is here described as 'sustainable disaster governance', a continuing trend of expansion and systematization in the world humanitarian system after the Cold War.

DEDICATION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis owes a great deal to the example and advice of my academic supervisor, Professor Mark Duffield. Amid increasing institutionalization in the humanitarian industry, his ability to create ways of seeing it in a bigger political context has been an inspiration, even if sometimes hard to follow.

Warm thanks are due to all the people who gave generously of their knowledge, insights, encouragement and material help during the research, especially: Jacob Akol, Ray Bush, Jean-Francois Darcq, Martin Gainsborough, Caroline Gullick, Alex King, Jane MacAskill, Una Macaskill, Paul Marshall, Jason Matus, Stephanie Maxwell, Paul Murphy, Ben Parker, Liz Phillippo, John Ryle, Buzz Sharp and Philip Winter. None of these people are responsible for any errors in the thesis.

The work is dedicated to my parents, Daphne and John Medley, and my wife, Nongyao Nawarat, for their loving support and patience.

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, the work is the candidate's own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of, others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

SIGNED: Michael Medlen ..... DATE: 19th Jan 2011

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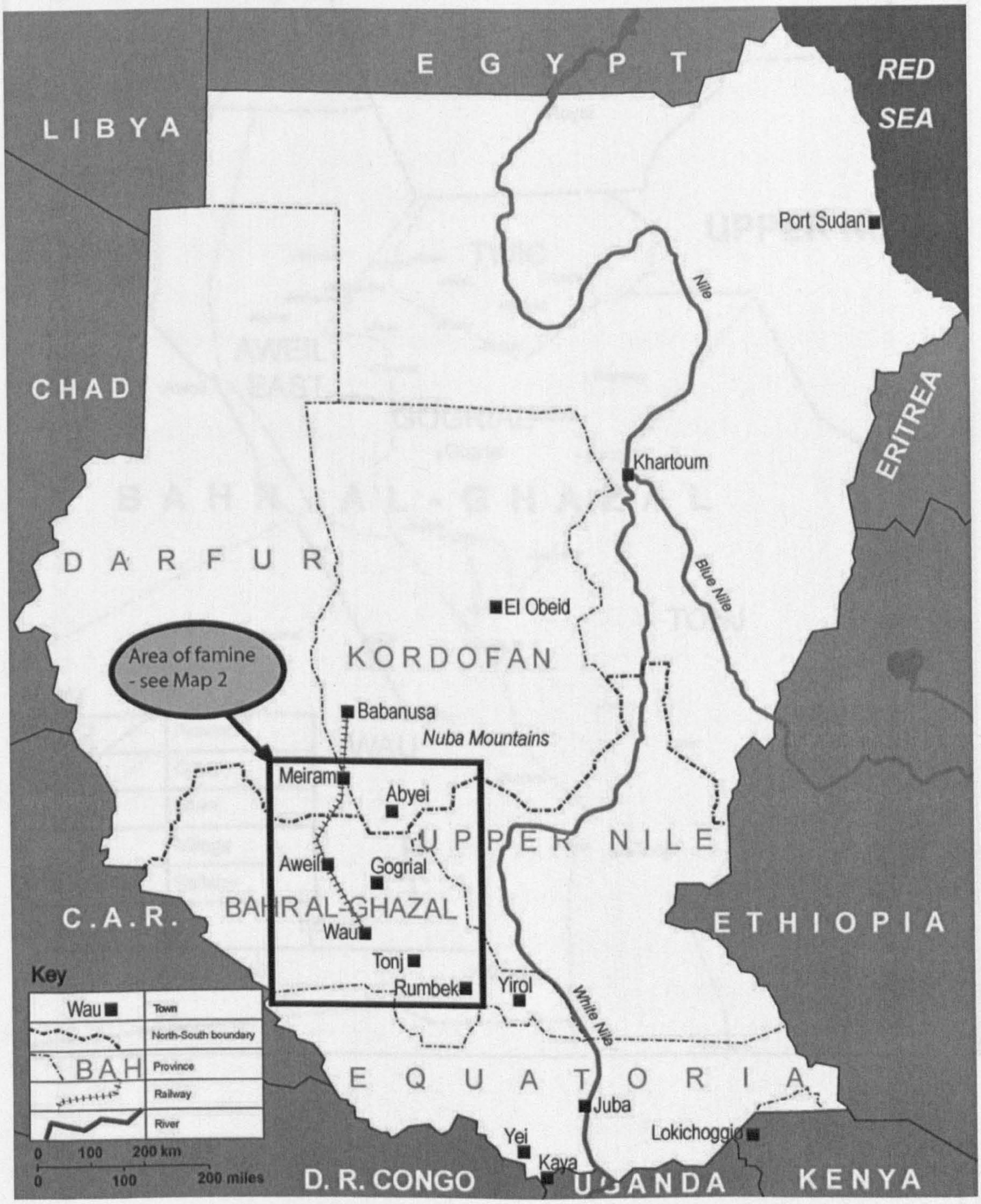
GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SPECIAL TERMS

Term	Explanation
ANA	Annual needs assessment
Baggara	Cattle-herding peoples of southern Darfur and southern Kordofan
C-130	A kind of cargo plane. See Note 19 on page 85.
CAP	Consolidated Appeals Process (co-ordinated by the UN)
CFSAM	Crop and food supply assessment mission – a routine of the GIEWS practised in disaster-prone regions
CMR	Crude mortality rate
DFID	Department for International Development, the main aid donor agency of the UK Government
DHA	Department for Humanitarian Affairs, a UN agency replaced by OCHA in 1997
DMO	Database and Monitoring Office (of the SRRA)
ECHO	European Community Humanitarian Office
FEAU	Food Economy Analysis Unit, the main field needs data unit within WFP-SS
FTS	Financial Tracking Service. Online database of donor contributions maintained by OCHA, accessible at http://ocha.unog.ch/fts
G77	Group of 77, the main coordinating structure for mutual solidarity of less developed countries in the UN General Assembly
GIEWS	Global Information and Early Warning System administered by FAO and WFP. See Section 4.2.
GHD	Good Humanitarian Donorship, an programme of ostensible self-improvement by state donors (see Section 6.5.2)
GOS	Government of Sudan
HCU	Humanitarian Coordination Unit, a Khartoum-based office of the UN that existed in 1998, assisting the UNCERO on high-level issues. See Section 3.4.1.
HRW	Human Rights Watch, a research and advocacy NGO
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee, a high-level policy committee of humanitarian implementing agencies, convened at the UN
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	Internally displaced person
IDS	Institute of Development Studies, Sussex University
IHL	International Humanitarian Law, the laws of war
IRIN	Integrated Regional Information Networks, a newswire service run by the UN for eastern and central Africa
IGAD	Inter-Governmental Authority on Development, a grouping of Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Kenya, Somalia (in principle) and Uganda.
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières, a group of medical aid NGOs

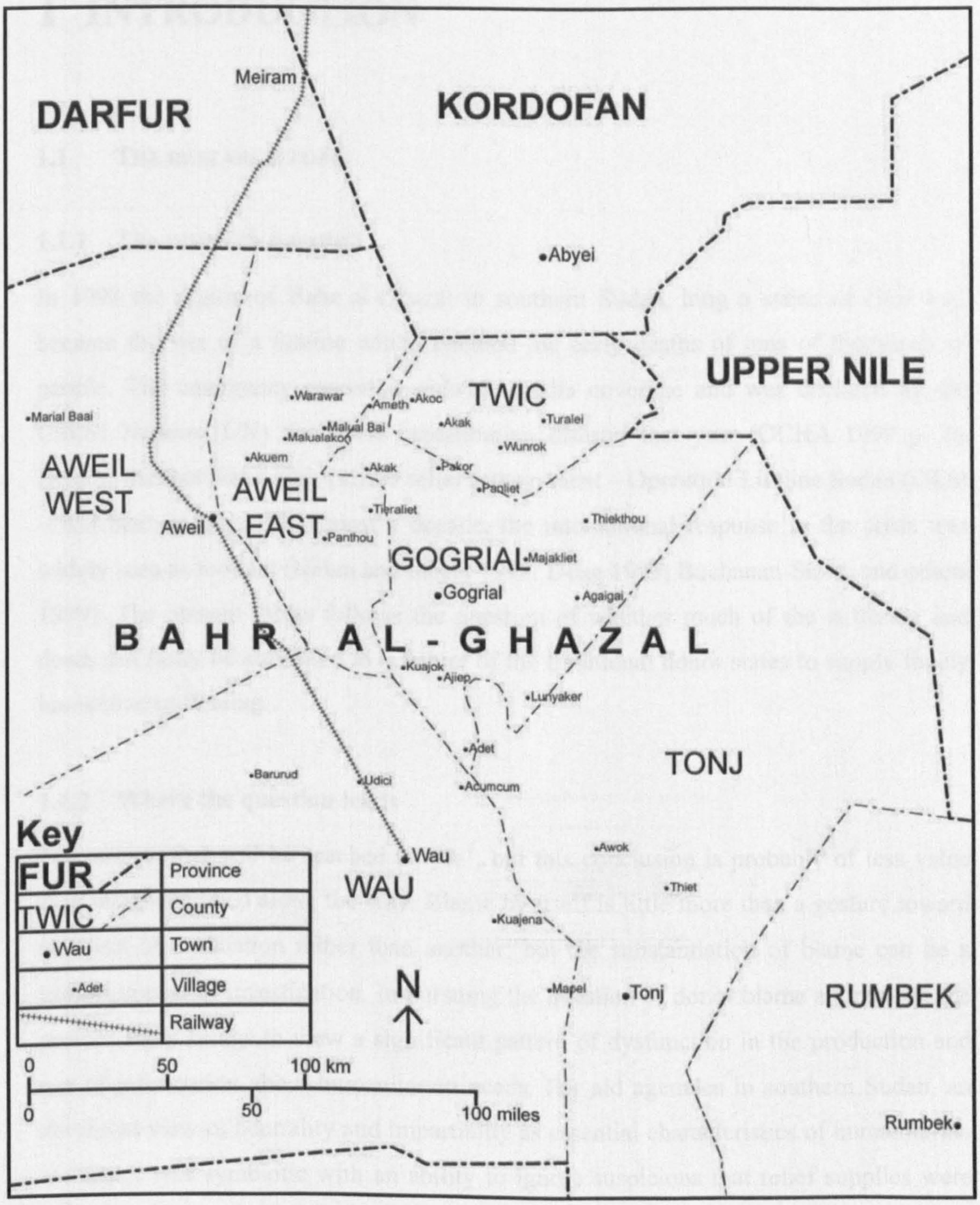
murahaleen	Militia drawn from *Baggara* people
OCHA	Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs, a UN agency
OED	Oxford English Dictionary
OLS	Operation Lifeline Sudan: the UN-co-ordinated relief operation for southern Sudanese
PDF	Popular Defence Forces, an official militia of the GOS.
relief magnet	A location that simultaneously attracts relief-seekers and relief supplies
SCF	Save the Children Fund: former name of an international group of NGOs. ('Fund' has now been dropped).
SPLM/A	Sudanese People's Liberation Movement/Army: the main rebel group in southern Sudan and adjoining areas
SRRA	Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Association: the aid-liaison organization of the SPLM
UNCERO	UN Co-ordinator for Emergency Relief Operations, nominally the head of OLS, resident in Khartoum. See Section 1.3.2.
UNDP	UN Development Programme, a UN developmental aid agency
UNGA	UN General Assembly
UNICEF	The UN child welfare agency
UNICSS	UN Information Centre for the Sudan and Somalia, a short-lived office in Khartoum, c1992
UNHCHR	UN High Commission on Human Rights
UNSC	UN Security Council
UNSG	UN Secretary-General
USAID	United States Agency for International Development, the main aid donor agency of the USG
USCR	United States Committee for Refugees, a non-governmental policy group
USG	United States Government
WFP	World Food Programme, the main UN agency for handling food aid

MAPS

Map 1: Sudan, framing the famine area



Map 2: The famine area



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE RESEARCH TOPIC

1.1.1 The research question

In 1998 the region of Bahr al-Ghazal in southern Sudan, long a scene of civil war, became the site of a famine which entailed the early deaths of tens of thousands of people. The emergency gained worldwide media coverage and was declared by the United Nations (UN) the worst humanitarian disaster that year (OCHA 1999 p. 1). Despite the fact that a high-profile relief arrangement – Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) – had been in place for almost a decade, the international response to the crisis was widely seen as too late (Nelan and others 1998; Deng 1999; Buchanan-Smith and others 1999). The present thesis follows the question of whether much of the suffering and death can fairly be attributed to a failure of the traditional donor states to supply timely humanitarian funding.

1.1.2 Where the question leads

The answer that will be reached is 'yes', but this conclusion is probably of less value than insights gained along the way. Blame by itself is little more than a gesture toward one part of a situation rather than another; but the substantiation of blame can be a useful process of investigation. In pursuing the question of donor blame attentively, the present study brings to view a significant pattern of dysfunction in the production and use of information about humanitarian needs. For aid agencies in southern Sudan, an absolutist view of neutrality and impartiality as essential characteristics of humanitarian assistance was symbiotic with an ability to ignore suspicions that relief supplies were being appropriated by fighters. The doctrine designating relief as intended only for the neediest people, however impractical, was both a response and a support to low levels of donor resourcing. At the country-wide level, an institutional structure for sustainable governance of the chronic disaster through annual budget appeals became the dominant consumer of information about human vulnerability and needs, creating a system with

little sensitivity to exceptional events. The budget was severely constrained by ongoing pressures for parsimony. Under these circumstances, the desirability of having needs figures which corresponded with what donors regarded as realistic partly explains why the production of those figures was opaque, its concepts ambiguous, and the inter-relationship of different reports confusing. These characteristics helped some to argue that donors had been given insufficient advance warning of the danger of famine.

Although the famine response studied here is now more than a decade in the past, the case is pertinent to current humanitarian debates. The system of sustainable disaster governance has continued to expand worldwide. The recent critical literature of humanitarianism has had to grapple with increased convergence between relief and military activity not only in Iraq and Afghanistan, but less obtrusively in a host of other countries too (Duffield 2004;, 2007; Donini and others 2008; Walker and Maxwell 2009 pp. 72-78, 88-90). Yet the conditions of the 1998 Bahr al-Ghazal famine were not entirely different. Indeed, the present work provides strong evidence that the late response to this emergency resulted partly from competing US concern about a growth of international terrorism and Sudan's suspected role in it. Hunger-deaths in 1998 may have to be included in the catalogue of collateral damage sustained in the course of promoting the security of populations in rich liberal states. This likelihood seems not to have been observed hitherto in the literature of the famine. The fact that it has not been observed is itself a significant piece of evidence that the production of humanitarian knowledge is in some ways more suitable for obscuring the competition of political motives than for pursuing the immediate interests of the afflicted people it is supposed to serve.

This introductory chapter sets the scene in three main respects. First it elaborates on humanitarianism as a contested ethics and a terrain of power. Then it introduces the situation in southern Sudan leading up to 1998. Thirdly, it describes the two most prominent previous accounts of the 1998 Bahr al-Ghazal famine, showing how their apportionment of blame largely avoids the donor states. The chapter ends with an account of the research process and an outline of the overall structure of the thesis.

1.2 HUMANITARIANISM

The word 'humanitarian' is used in the research question to indicate the broad institutional and ideological context in which the central question – whether the famine deaths are attributable to lateness of donations – is at home. The question demands an understanding of the kinds of expectations that rest on donors and their collaborators to prevent such deaths, the ethical rules and tradeoffs that are seen as required and permissible, and the structures of organisations and other institutions through which relevant actions are formed. 'Humanitarianism' can be taken as naming the complex of all these things. In the 1998 famine, the term was used to characterize the nature of the situation by governmental donors (Short 1998b; USAID 1998a), UN agencies (OLS 1998e; WFP 1998g), non-governmental agencies (NSCC 1998a; World Vision 1998b), journalists (Dawes 1998b; Nelan and others 1998), and researchers (Deng 1999; Rone 1999).

Yet in the view of the present thesis humanitarianism is not a well-defined system; rather it is an example of what William E. Connolly has called a 'cluster concept' (Connolly 1983 pp. 9-44) and (following Gallie 1955-1956) an 'essentially contested concept'. Such concepts are 'characteristic of political life and political enquiry' (Connolly 1983 p. 18). They cannot satisfactorily be sidestepped, because they play a part in constituting the actions and practices to be studied (ibid. p. 36). To refer to humanitarianism, or to function in its domain, involves implicitly or explicitly selecting significant elements, patterns and pathways from within a mass of inter-related social institutions, both ideational and material. Different users of the concept inevitably emphasize different features because they have different viewpoints and also different purposes and interests. There are many ethical ideas and norms that may be regarded as humanitarian, yet often in real situations they conflict with one another and with the mundane requirements of the institutions that are supposed to support them. Nevertheless, to invoke humanitarianism and concepts associated with it is often at least implicitly to derive authority from it as if it were a fixed object, and this may serve purposes of ideological grounding for actions and projects: reassurance, justification, assertion or intimidation (Marriage 2006a).

The present section serves to show how, at a general level, the domain of humanitarianism is contested. In doing so it introduces many of the features that played a part in the Bahr al-Ghazal famine, including norms and constraints through which donor actions can be judged, and the problems of their applicability. It begins by laying out the ideational roots and diversity in historical understandings of humanitarianism up to the Cold War period, and then analyses the changes confronting relief agencies and donors after the Cold War. A third sub-section describes how these new conditions affected interpretations and modalities of humanitarianism. Finally it explicitly considers the expectations within this discourse for donors to prioritize the alleviation of suffering and saving of lives.

1.2.1 Conceptions of humanitarianism up to the Cold War

How did 'humanitarianism' come to be a central idea in situations like that of Sudan in 1998? Historically, the meanings of the term have been very mixed. The source concept 'humanity' was a key word in the European Enlightenment, combining three ideas. In the sense of an inherent moral quality or spontaneous impulse it suggested *a foundation of ethical motivation* which, while not necessarily contradicting the revelations and commandments of religion, was capable of standing without them. In this sense it built on the theorising of human sympathy as a natural trait on which morality could be founded, by philosophers such as Shaftesbury, Rousseau, Hutcheson, Hume and Smith (Fiering 1976; Boltanski 1999 pp. 35-54). At the same time 'humanity' could represent *the prime object of ethics* as the dignity and welfare of each person simply by virtue of the status of being human. And beyond that there was the inspiring vision of humanity as the *species as a whole*, now seen as capable of making joint progress through its own rational powers. This three-fold meaning made the term flexible but also ambiguous. Certainly it represented a challenge to the derivation of authority from church and state, and it played an important part in the rhetoric of both the American and French revolutions; Thomas Paine coined the phrase 'religion of humanity' in the context of the former (Paine 1896 [1776]) and the cry of *humanité* was ubiquitous in the latter (McCloy 1957 p. 4). But in being harnessed to desperate power struggles it became associated with practical failures, compromises and moral obscenities.

So when the word 'humanitarianism' first actually became current it tended to have unfavourable connotations (OED). For Balzac, coining the French '*humanitarisme*' in 1838 (Seeber 1961 p. 42), it expressed misgivings about a state bureaucracy taking over responsibility for people's bodily welfare: an apprehension of what Foucault would later describe more fully as biopolitics (Foucault 1998 [1976]). It was a practice 'which bears the same relation to holy Catholic charity as system does to art, putting rationality in place of works' (Balzac 1909 [1838] p. 54)[1]. Auguste Comte in the 1850s ambitiously attempted to unite such systematization (informed by his positive social science) with feelings of affection and reverence, in his project for a universal Church of Humanity (Wernick 2001; Gray 2003 pp. 30-36). The grandiosity of such visions made 'humanitarianism' a useful term for those in Britain who wished to mock social reformers. The word was used with a touch of irony to convey foolishness, emotional weakness, misplaced piety and hypocrisy. Progressives thus often felt the need to disown it. In one piece of journalism, for instance, the attitude of a callous parish poor-house guardian was considered deplorable 'even [by] those who shrink from all parade of humanitarianism' (Daily News 1846) while, in another, respect could be given to an innovative criminologist because he was 'wholly untainted with the prevalent weak and morbid humanitarianism' (Economist 1857).

Although humanitarianism at this time was recognised in many fields – poor relief, the penal system, animal welfare, labour protection and more – the paradigm case was the agitation against international slavery. In retrospect, this was the field in which the figure of the British humanitarian had emerged most distinctly as a social type. Many proto-humanitarians, moved by descriptions of the horrors of slave-taking and transportation (for instance Sharp 1773; Porteus 1783; Clarkson 1786; Equiano 1789) had identified themselves by displaying the popular campaigning cameo first produced by Josiah Wedgwood in 1787, which showed a chained and supplicant African with the words: 'Am I not a man and a brother?' (Midgley 1995 pp. 37-38; Dabydeen c. 2007). Besides making inclusion in the species the premise for moral respect, the message of the cameo was an appeal to humane feelings, and the display of it was a sign of possessing them.

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[1] In the original French: '...qui est à la divine Charité catholique ce que le Système est à l'Art, le Raisonnement substitué à l'Oeuvre'.

The intensity of this theme and the grandeur of its implications – reaching out to an enlightened ordering of affairs worldwide – helped to create an identity for humanitarianism distinguishable from that of mere philanthropy. However, humanitarianism also inherited some of the features by which the latter had itself emerged from older traditions of charity and poor law. Philanthropy was already partially loosened from both religious institutions and formal government. It largely represented new money: a recycling of some of the profits created in the acceleration of capitalist development. It made use of modern means of organization such as specialised societies formed under the law, the principle of subscription, advertisements in the press, public meetings in hired venues, and networks of letter-writers (Cunningham and Innes 1998).

These methods helped achieve headline victories for the abolitionists in the passing of the 1807 Slave Trade Act and the 1833 Slavery Abolition Act, but the wisdom and effectiveness of this legislation continued to be debated, and the emancipation movement became mired in a host of practical problems: how to prevent other nations and illegal traffickers from continuing the trade; what to do with freed slaves; how to obtain and organize wage labourers to take over work previously done by slaves; and how to develop African societies not only to replace slaving in their economies, but more broadly to express and inculcate the enlightened values on which so much importance had been laid. The parliamentary campaign had always been flanked by a host of other schemes. The Sierra Leone Company, for instance, had been formed at the end of the eighteenth century by anti-slavery campaigners whose vision joined benevolence with profit-seeking (Gann and Duignan 1999 p. 378). Half a century later, the 1841 Niger expedition, got up through extensive public subscriptions, meetings in Exeter Hall, patronage from Prince Albert, and reluctant cooperation from the government, combined an anti-slavery agenda with other objectives of a scientific, religious, commercial and military nature, and was a comprehensive disaster (House 1950).

Continuing expansion of the middle classes, and advance of communication technologies continued, however, to increase the importance of public opinion and its potential to be moved by compassion toward distant suffering. Newspaper accounts of

the privations of soldiers in the Crimean War (1853-1856), conveyed by the new telegraph system, stirred emotions widely in Britain, resulting not only in the mobilization of private funds for medical assistance, but also governmental action using public money (Edgerton 1999 pp. 10, 149-150). The signing of the first Geneva Convention and invention of the principle of neutral assistance under the sign of the Red Cross (1863-1864), opened the way for such compassion to be delinked from obvious national partisanship. During the Franco-Prussian war of 1870 no fewer than 16 charitable funds were set up in Britain, providing assistance of various kinds to war victims (Pall Mall Gazette 1870). One of these (later to become the British Red Cross), gained the patronage of the Queen on the one hand and, on the other, launched a penny subscription which, through hastily-convened public meetings and committees throughout the land, gathered contributions from the masses in schools and factories, and within three months raised more than a quarter of a million pounds (The Times 1870; NSASWW 1870; Moorehead 1998 p. 505).

This event was symptomatic of increased confidence in Britain and a few other countries, that technological advances and industrial growth could bring improvements in civilization. In a quasi-Hegelian way, humanitarianism was, for many, the spirit of the coming age. The victory of the abolitionist North in the American Civil War added to its credibility. Humanitarianism could be used to be used to justify imperialism, on the grounds that backward people could be ruled for their own benefit, and brought up like children (Siger 1907; cited in Betts 1961 pp. 99-100). The author of the 1911 *Encyclopaedia Britannica* article on 'civilization' ('H. S. WI' 1911), setting out a linear account of mankind's development, named humanitarianism as the inspiration of a cosmopolitan future in which jealousies between nations would be reduced, the world would be economically unified, and the species improved though eugenics.

The world wars and international ideological struggles of the twentieth century reduced the potential for humanitarianism to be treated as destiny or panacea, but did provide opportunities and strong reasons to build on the Geneva Convention and Red Cross, pursuing a group of projects in international law and institution-building with the relatively limited aim of protecting people as individuals. A space of humanitarianism was then found particularly in the gaps between the jurisdictions of states. It was referred to in the agenda of the Fifth Committee of the League of Nations ('social and

humanitarian affairs') and later in the chartered purposes of the UN ('[t]o achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character') (UN 1945 Article 1), as well as in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN 1948) and the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. Crucially, in relation to contemporary use of the term, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), when seeking to build on the Geneva Conventions, decided to replace the phrase 'laws of war' with 'international humanitarian law' (IHL) (Pictet 1975 pp. 11-19; Best 1997 p. 12). This gained currency through the Geneva Diplomatic Conference of 1974-1977 'on the Reaffirmation and Development of International Humanitarian Law applicable in Armed Conflicts' (ICRC and others 1977). It thence became possible to interpret humanitarianism as a legally-precise procedure, even though historically and in common usage the concept was encumbered with a much broader range of significance, and though it was still needed for a host of situations where the application of the law was far from clear.

From this legalistic point of view, two crucial elements of humanitarianism are impartiality and neutrality. The Geneva Convention in several places seeks to protect the provision of aid given through 'impartial humanitarian organizations', specifically mentioning the ICRC. The Red Cross movement, when it proclaimed its fundamental principles in 1965, had defined impartiality as requiring that assistance is provided with 'no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions' but aiming solely 'to relieve suffering' in a way that prioritizes 'the most urgent cases' (Pictet 1979; ICRC 1996). To maintain a sharp focus, that priority is in the first place on individual suffering of a bodily kind, and the acute risk of death. Neutrality, on the other hand, requires that the aid worker 'may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature' (ibid.). From the aid agency's point of view, this is avowedly a pragmatic rule instituted 'in order [for the givers of assistance] to continue to enjoy the confidence of all' (ibid.). Although the neutrality and impartiality of aid had been key principles in the formation of the Red Cross and the first Geneva Convention more than a century earlier, it was only in the 1970s that the practices in which they were central became so authoritatively asserted as an essence of humanitarianism. Thereafter, 'humanitarian' was seen by many as denoting a technical paradigm for mainstream emergency relief aid (Riddell 2007 pp. 311-312).

1.2.2 Problems of neutral and impartial relief after the Cold War

One of the main achievements of the 1974-1977 diplomatic conference was the adoption of Protocol II additional to the 1949 Geneva Conventions, which extended to people amid civil wars some of the legal protection already afforded to those in wars between sovereign states. The agreed Protocol was neither as extensive nor as binding as many had hoped, due to the fears of Third World countries that it might reduce state sovereignty and legitimize external interventions (Pictet 1985 p. 48). Nor was it easy to apply in the Cold War era when such countries tended to be aligned either to one or other of the superpower blocs. Any internationally-supported relief operations in territories controlled by insurgent groups – such as those in Eritrea and Tigray (Duffield and Prendergast 1994) – typically needed to operate on the basis of trust, solidarity or partisan support rather than neutrality (Duffield 1994 Section 6.2).

On the end of the Cold War, however, humanitarianism was suddenly a bigger topic. This can be seen in the surging use of the concept in public and academic media. In the *Economist*, for example, whereas 180 articles and advertisements used the word 'humanitarian' during the 1980s, 788 did in the 1990s.[2] The number of items referring more specifically to 'humanitarian aid' increased from 37 to 129. By contrast, the rate of appearance of the phrase 'emergency aid' remained steady – 46 cases in both the 1980s and 1990s – and to 'famine relief' dropped slightly, from 19 to 15. Moreover, phrases like 'humanitarian crisis' and 'humanitarian disaster' – applying the idea to perturbing situations even before the question of response is explicitly raised – made their first appearances in that publication in the 1990s, reflecting usage elsewhere.

It was not only that more people were being afflicted by disaster (indeed, it is not clear that more *were* being stricken) or that more such suffering was coming to light. The insistence on 'humanitarianism' was largely a reaction to the demands of a new kinds of disaster and new opportunities for dealing with them. The dwindling of struggle between global superpowers around 1989 accentuated the effects of increasing globalization to bring about a drastic weakening of state control in many poor countries. Reduction of aid to client regimes – often along with awkward shifts from

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[2] The figures in this paragraph were obtained by interrogation of The Economist Historical Archive at http://www.tlemea.com on 10th June 2009. Similar results were found in searches of other databases.

variants of socialism towards the kinds of decentralisation, liberalization and budget-cutting prescribed by the international financial institutions – led to an initial upsurge in the incidence of civil wars, and a change in their dynamics (Kaldor 1999). Without the lens and shaping-influence of the Cold War, other layers of conflict became more apparent. Ideological rebellion might still be one of these, but the prominence of others was increased: clan feuding, ethnic nationalism, banditry, warlordism, contests over resources. Large numbers of people were seen to be living chronically on the brink of ruin, many being pushed over the edge by shocks to their livelihoods. The syndrome was widely recognised as a new phenomenon: 'complex emergency' (UNSG 1991; Duffield 1994; Macrae and Zwi 1994). It was not perceived as a normal condition of poverty, but neither did it conform to the template that had hitherto provided a standard model of a disaster relief situation: the momentary crisis.

As well as an overall change in demand for relief there was also an important shift in the conditions of supply. Now that superpower alignment was no longer an important factor, and the UN Security Council was less hindered by the opposition between Western and Soviet interests, it became easier to think of an international community that could mandate and organize operations to assist and protect populations amid civil wars. This resulted in two major new strategies for relief operations: negotiated humanitarian access, and forcible humanitarian intervention. Negotiated humanitarian access agreements began to appear in the late 1980s. Under them, the UN attempted to secure the delivery of aid in countries where there were insurgencies by acting as a guarantor of neutrality and impartiality and arranging delivery modalities acceptable to the warring parties (Duffield 1994 Section 6.3). The creation of OLS in Sudan has often been seen as the classic example of this innovation (UNSG 1989 p. 22; Minear and others 1991; African Rights 1997 pp. 124-125; Glaser 2005 pp. 1-3). Variants were also developed around the same time in Ethiopia and Angola (Duffield 1994 Section 6.3).

But in some cases, the relief of suffering seemed to require a more aggressive approach. A doctrine of forcible humanitarian intervention took a big step forward with the relief operation for the Kurds in northern Iraq, mounted initially by the United States military and its allies after the Gulf War, and arguably authorised by Resolution 688 of the UN Security Council in April 1992 (Tomasevski 1994). A stronger legal precedent was set by Resolution 794 in December of the same year, which gave the United States license

'to use all necessary means to establish as soon as possible a secure environment for humanitarian relief operations in Somalia' (UNSC 1992). For both negotiated access and forcible interventions, the epithet 'humanitarian' was a vital term in asserting and debating their legitimacy in the face of the fact that these practices challenged the norm of state sovereignty.

Even within 'safe areas' or in the aftermath of military operations, or under negotiated access agreements, it soon became apparent that the realization of neutrality and impartiality was very problematic. These doctrines had been formed in the context of war between modern nation states, and had been only patchily successful even there (Best 1997; Moorehead 1998). The difficulties were greater amid internal wars, where the applicable law was weaker, and structures of accountability among fighters and local authorities often harder to identify: a fact that was exposed by several studies of the South Sudan case by the mid-1990s (Aboum and others 1990; Keen 1994; African Rights 1995a; 1997; Karim and others 1996; Duffield and others 1999; Loane and Schümer 2000). Aid agencies depended on warring parties, whether governments or rebels, as local guarantors of the security of goods and people. These de facto authorities could set rules and make ad hoc rulings. It was never completely within aid agencies' power to prevent goods being stolen in more-or-less mysterious ways; or to distribute aid in such as way that it could not be used for partisan purposes or free up other resources to do so.

1.2.3 Efforts to recast humanitarianism

Under the conditions of complex emergency, strict interpretations of neutrality and impartiality were not only hindered by the practical difficulty for agencies of controlling aid in the face of pressures from local powers; they also conflicted with the emergence of the strategy that is here termed 'sustainable disaster governance'. This refers to the trend to create a managerial global humanitarian system, especially since the end of the Cold War.

Aiding in a chronic disaster is different from responding to a sudden one. In the latter case it is hard to cost and calibrate responses. The extent of the need is often unclear. At the same time, a dramatic new event, attracting media coverage of death and suffering,

is liable to spark an explosion and raise a firestorm of public compassion and fundraising within the populations of rich countries, a social phenomenon with a life of its own. One example is the British public reaction to the Franco-Prussian war described in Section 1.2.1. Comparable recent public donor firestorms include responses to the Biafran war famine of 1968-70, the Ethiopian famines of 1972 and 1984 (the latter of which memorably gave birth to the Live Aid phenomena which itself became progenitor of many modern telethons), the Asian Tsunami of 2005 and the Haiti Earthquake of 2010. In the heat of such events a calculating attitude to the costs and benefits of assistance is an obscenity (Boltanski 1999 p. 24). But when a disaster has emerged too gradually to become a hot issue for donors, or when it becomes old news, aid resources must be disbursed with more planning and parsimony. The situation in a chronic disaster is more like the classic setting of economic science, in that it requires the appearance of dealing rationally with the 'relationship between ends and scarce means which have alternative uses' (Robbins 1932 p. 15).

The demands of palpable economic efficiency apply in two interrelated endeavours: cost-reduction and need-reduction. Pressure to minimize the costs of a sustained relief programme tends to lead to strategies of localization; international aid agencies are pushed toward the employment of local staff in place of expatriates, outsourcing operational functions to local contractors and purchasing many of their supplies from local traders. These substitutions involve a partial abdication of direct managerial control over the way operations are carried out. They correspond with the shift to an audit technology of public administration witnessed in liberal states (Rose 2000 pp. 147-156). But the pre-existing social commitments of local actors are liable to make aid-funded resources more easily captured by local powers and used directly or indirectly for political purposes including armed conflict (Anderson 1999 pp. 37-53).

Relief need-reduction, on the other hand, largely means being seen to make local people more productive so as to reduce the requirement for external assistance. For example, seeds and tools are supplied to farmers with the assumption that they will decrease the need for food aid. More ambitiously, co-operatives and revolving funds may be established for agricultural investment. This kind of activity dovetails with the ideology and practice of 'sustainable development' carried forward from colonial regimes by NGOs, becoming mainstream development discourse in the 1980s (Duffield 2007 pp.

67-70). The ideology has a flavour of hard-headed economics, yet the hard economic case for projects to implement it is often not set out explicitly or adhered to rigorously. This may be because the results of rigorous evaluations on such lines would often be unfavourable or at least problematic. Zoë Marriage has described how the rhetoric of sustainability-creation was used in the late 1990s in Southern Sudan as a cover for reductions in donor funding despite the fact that anything more than the most casual glance showed projects failing to create the reality of self-reliance (Marriage 2006b pp. 482-488; 2006a pp. 123-127). A propensity to let ideal paradigms (such as an assumed general shift from relief to development phases) obscure the actual condition of human welfare was identified by Mark Bradbury (Bradbury 1998) in the 1990s as a trend of 'normalising the crisis'. It facilitated a shift away from the rigorous prioritization of the relief of bodily suffering that is demanded by the Red Cross conceptualization of neutrality and impartiality.

The shift toward sustainable disaster governance was propelled by the increasing involvement of donor states in humanitarian aid. Within the space of a year, from 1990 to 1991, the humanitarian component of official development assistance recorded by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) more than doubled. The increase was partly due to a spate of disasters in 1991 (Benthall 1993 pp. 29-36), but the new level of humanitarian aid was nevertheless broadly sustained through the decade (Randel and German 2003 p. 14). The enduring change may be attributed in part to the invention of negotiated humanitarian access (Duffield 2007 p. 77), the development of forcible humanitarian intervention, and the potential for these to be used in a wider pattern of global governance dominated by liberal states. These innovations were linked to a more elaborate humanitarian infrastructure. After several years of discussions within the UN about creating a 'new international humanitarian order' (UNSG 1990), 1991 saw a landmark UN General Assembly resolution, 46/182, for strengthening the coordination of humanitarian assistance (UNSG 1991). It paved the way for the creation of the twin institutions of the Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP), and Common Humanitarian Action Plans (CHAPs), which would become foundations of sustainable disaster governance built around procedures of annual budgeting. How this worked in the case of Sudan in 1998 will be examined in detail in Chapters 4 and 5 of the present thesis.

Resolution 46/182 strongly reaffirmed the principles of impartiality, neutrality and national sovereignty in relief operations (UN 1991 especially Articles 2 and 3). This was necessary in order to win the support of a majority of states (Eliasson 2004). But in practice, these principles could not be applied strictly. In the years that followed, international humanitarians attempted to make more elbow room for themselves by expounding variant understandings of humanitarian ethics. For instance, it was suggested that the legal definition of neutrality could be changed to cover forcible humanitarian intervention (Griffiths and others 1995 pp. 57-58).

Rather than such frontal attempts to contest the meaning of key concepts, NGOs in the mid-1990s on the whole preferred to develop parallel versions. They took part in creating sets of guidelines – such as the Providence Principles (Minear and Weiss 1993), the Code of Conduct (Red Cross and NGOs 1994), and the Mohonk Criteria (Ebersole and others 1995) – and manuals of good practice (Minear and Weiss 1993; Anderson 1996; 1999 and countless in-house agency documents) – shoring up a variant conception of humanitarian action that promised to be workable for them. The Code of Conduct contained a much-weakened version of the principle of neutrality: 'When we give aid it is not a partisan or political act and should not be viewed as such'. Another article – 'Aid priorities are calculated on the basis of need alone' (Article 2) – echoed the Red Cross formulation of impartiality. But the meaning of 'need' was broadened. The alleviation of suffering was declared to be the 'prime' motivation of relief (Article 1), not the only one. Alternative kinds of need – features of sustainable disaster governance – were indicated later in the Code. These were: 'to build disaster response on local capacities' (Article 6), 'to involve programme beneficiaries in the management of relief aid' (Article 7), and 'to reduce future vulnerabilities to disaster as well as meeting basic needs' (Article 8).

Perhaps even more importantly, the Code launched the idea of 'the humanitarian imperative' into familiar currency (Slim 2002). It's first article, headed 'The humanitarian imperative comes first' goes on effectively to claim a general right of access, backing up the ad hoc precedents for humanitarian intervention from Northern Iraq and Somalia.

> The right to receive humanitarian assistance, and to offer it, is a fundamental humanitarian principle which should be enjoyed by all citizens of all countries…. (Red Cross and NGOs 1994 Article 1)

This right is balanced with a duty:

> As members of the international community, we recognise our obligation to provide humanitarian assistance wherever it is needed. (ibid.)

But the duty is vitiated by ambiguities. It is unclear whether the supposed obligation is to provide sufficient assistance to satisfy all needs, or merely to be active in areas where needs are felt. It is also uncertain whether the obligation is supposed to fall individually upon each NGO that has signed the document, or upon the signatories collectively, or the international community as a whole. If the latter, then the assembly of NGOs was entitled to give its opinion about the existence of an obligation but had little authority to create one.

Moreover, whereas ICRC safeguarded its independence by not accepting state money, most major NGOs had become much more dependent on governmental funding since the early 1980s (de Waal 1997 pp. 141-143). While valuing the idea of independence, generally they were unwilling to cut themselves off from this source of income, but instead bolstered their idealistic credentials by declaring an intention 'not to act as instruments of government foreign policy' (Red Cross and NGOs 1994 Article 4).

The Code of Conduct thus represented a wresting-away of mainstream understandings of humanitarianism from those previously established in IHL and the Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross. The rules of neutrality and impartiality, though retained as a rhetorical option, were in effect turned into flexible guidelines. This flexibility has been applauded by some as appropriate for adaptation to complex and unpredictable circumstances, and for learning and innovation among actors who can on the whole be trusted to operate in good faith (Minear and Weiss 1995; Slim 2004). Alex de Waal, more sceptically, postulated a 'humanitarian Gresham's Law' according to which the fact of economic competition between aid agencies would have a tendency to erode their ethical cultures (de Waal 1997 pp. 139-40). To resist this, de Waal propounded a

case for an official international famine relief commissioner or humanitarian ombudsman (pp. 213-221). The signatories to the Code had vowed: 'We hold ourselves accountable to both those we seek to assist and those from whom we accept resources', and to show this in 'an attitude of openness and transparency' (Red Cross and NGOs 1994 Article 9). In practice, however, accountability to local people remained an awkward concept, while accountability to donors increasingly involved formal processes of needs-appraisal, progress-monitoring and impact-evaluation, using such technologies as logical framework planning and analysis (Duffield 2001 pp. 80-81). These processes, in line with other aspects of sustainable disaster governance, conveyed an appearance of expert accountability that could be impressive – indeed intimidating – to outsiders. A case that such approaches can obscure more than they reveal is made in Chapters 4 and 5 below (see especially Section 4.5.2).

A comparable reformulation of humanitarianism was made by at least one prominent governmental donor. The British Secretary of State at the Department for International Development (DFID), Clare Short, in April 1998 unveiled a set of 'Principles for a New Humanitarianism' (Short 1998c). Like the Code of Conduct, it was presented as, in the first place, a manifesto of self-discipline – guidelines that her department would apply in its own work – though it clearly aimed to influence others as well: particularly any agency that wished to receive DFID funding. It reaffirmed the principle of impartiality in much the same terms as the Red Cross, but laid no claim on neutrality. Much like the Code, it brought within the scope of humanitarianism many elements of sustainable disaster governance, such as the participation of local communities, the finding of 'durable solutions', the rebuilding of livelihoods, and the reduction of vulnerability. Like the Code, it saw a need for flexibility – 'We recognize that humanitarian intervention in conflict situations often poses genuine moral dilemmas' – but it was clearer in linking this with a requirement to be transparent in decision-making, communicating 'explicit analyses of the choices open to us and the ethical considerations involved'.

The phrase 'new humanitarianism' was widely picked up by commentators to describe and discuss contemporary trends in aid (RRN 1998; Harragin 1999; Chandler 2001; Fox 2001; Duffield 2001 pp. 78-107; Macrae 2002). Interestingly, however, it had been used rather earlier by a political scientist to describe the foreign policy significance of the

US's 1995 invasion of Haiti, after a military coup had overthrown the elected government.

> The relationship between moral principles, good governance, societal reform, and the national interest of the United States has become even more pronounced in recent years. Beginning with our involvement in Somalia to aid a starving country and continuing in Haiti to bring back democracy, the United States has moved beyond a commitment to human rights to what can best be described as a new humanitarianism.... No matter how ambivalent Americans are about using their troops as doctors, road builders, and instructors rather than fighters, the reality of the post-Cold War world is that the demands of the United States as the premier world military power fall under the general heading of humanitarian. The United States no longer faces 10,000 tanks in Europe or thousands of ICBMs targeted at its heartland, but it does face a world of hungry people, abusive government, grossly maldistributed resources, and angry masses willing to use force in order to settle old scores. (Kryzanek 1996 pp. 262-263)

The humanitarianism described here was new, not because its rules and methods had recently been modified by the aid agencies that operated them, but because the whole concern was seen as being freshly adopted by the state and its soldiers in order (as the author here portrays it) to dampen revolutionary instability in the world. These two kinds of newness reflect different perspectives but they are causally related, a fact that comes out particularly clearly in the writing of Mark Duffield (Duffield 2001 pp. 78-107; 2007; 2008). Duffield identifies the dominant design more pointedly as being about the containment by rich liberal states of international terrorists, criminals, refugees and other unwanted migrants.

Many aid-workers and commentators have responded to the growth of such New Humanitarianism with alarm, and attempted reassert the value of an independent humanitarian system that cleaves close to the principle of aid neutrality (Rieff 2002; Davis 2002; Kent 2004a pp. 861-864). David Rieff's much-cited book *A Bed for the Night* (Rieff 2002) laments the loss of belief in humanitarianism as 'a serious, wonderful and limited idea', contending that it has been abusively stretched to accommodate a variety of agendas, so as to 'become a catchall' (p.335). But the limited conception of humanitarianism was always going to have great difficulty in demarking and protecting its space in a wider terrain of humanitarianisms.

1.2.4 Expectations on states to provide humanitarian funding

Having consolidated some understanding in the foregoing three sub-sections of what was involved in humanitarianism by 1998, we now come to two questions that are begged by the main research question of this thesis. In order to ask 'whether much of the suffering and death can fairly be attributed to a failure of the traditional donor states to supply timely humanitarian funding' it is proper to consider exactly what states these are, and why anyone should have had any factual or moral expectation that they would do such a thing.

The short answer to the first of these supplementary questions is 'rich liberal states'. For 2001 it was estimated that the top ten donors provided more than 90 per cent of all governmental humanitarian aid (Randel and German 2003 pp. 3, 97). These were: the US, UK, Germany, Sweden, Netherlands, Norway, Italy, France and Switzerland (or Canada and Denmark rather than Italy and Switzerland, if aid to domestic refugees were included). More than a third of this aid was provided by the US.

It is harder to pin down the expectation on such states to provide humanitarian assistance. The nature and existence of any moral imperative to aid is greatly disputed with regard to human agents (Jamieson 1999). Extending this debate to states, there is the added complication of whether they can be treated as moral actors in their own right, and, if not, how to interpret their standing as aggregates of people who hold varying moral views (Opeskin 1996 pp. 30-32). As described in the previous section, the Code of Conduct asserted an obligation on the international community as part of a Humanitarian Imperative (Red Cross and NGOs 1994 Article 1), holding this (in the style of the US constitution) to be self-evident rather than a matter to be proven philosophically. As such, it depends on practical assent. And the character of practical assent in this case is rather mixed and complicated. The remainder of this section describes it mainly in terms of a historical tradition.

One does not have to be especially cynical to suppose that much of what is counted as humanitarian assistance in the statistics is supported by partisan motives alongside calls to alleviate suffering wherever it is found. Statistical evidence has often been used to infer the influence of commercial and geo-political factors on levels of humanitarian

and developmental aid (Buchanan-Smith and Davies 1995 p. 9; Devereux 2000; Smillie and Minear 2003 pp. 7-10; Olsen and others 2003). One can also trace such mixed motives running through the historical evolution of international relief.

Today's practice of state aid is recognisably foreshadowed in the British parliament's voting of £100,000 in aid to Portugal after the 1755 Lisbon Earthquake. It was undoubtedly facilitated by feelings of shocked compassion in London (Kendrick 1957 pp. 213-216), but was also related to the fact that, in the period of increasing European tension shortly to break out in the Seven Years War, Portugal was an important strategic ally and trading-partner (Rolt 1766 pp. 343-344). Later, during the heyday of European empires, the question of assistance to disaster-stricken populations tended to arise more as an internal matter of imperial governance. This is seen, for example, in British debates over policy responses to Irish and Indian famines (Hall-Matthews 1998).

A more geo-politically systematic tradition of humanitarian aid was established in the twentieth century with the backing by Allied governments during World War I of the Commission for the Relief of Belgium (Hoover 1959). This then provided a model for the American Relief Administration in the Russian famine of 1921-3. US Government support was advocated by its director, Herbert Hoover, as an way of engaging minimally with a threatening foreign regime – that of the Bolsheviks – in order to learn about its nature and especially its propensity to foment revolution elsewhere in the world (Fisher 1927 p. 14). It involved giving assistance on both sides in the Russian civil war (Forsythe 1989 p. 70). Forty years afterwards, looking back on what he saw as a continuous enterprise running through to Marshall Aid after World War II – and which he claimed had saved more than one billion lives – Hoover wrote:

> For thousands of years, the question 'Am I my brother's keeper?' has echoed in the conscience of mankind. The American people were the first in history to accept that obligation as a nation. Never before has a nation undertaken such burdens, consciously and collectively, that human life, and even civilization, might be preserved. Our people accomplished this task of compassion by self-denial, by longer hours of labor and greater tax burdens – and with no return other than to their own consciences. (Hoover 1959 p. ix)

It was indeed an impressive achievement, and one which understandably encouraged hope for worldwide human solidarity in the future, but American consciences were not understood as supporting a neutral or impartial kind of humanitarianism.

> These American labors not only saved human lives, they saved civilization for the Western world. They erected dams against the spread of Communism. (p. xv)

During the inter-war years, the United States had declined to join the International Relief Union (IRU), which was an attempt at a mutual insurance system between states, linked with the League of Nations (Hutchinson 2001). Indeed, it attempted to stifle the initiative. The British had been scarcely less discouraging of the IRU (ibid.). As great powers, these two had been unwilling to enter into commitments on the basis of general principles and multilateral obligations. Similarly in the Cold War, USAID and the State Department rejected proposals to strengthen the UN Disaster Relief Organization, candidly stating:

> [D]isaster relief is becoming increasingly a major instrument of our foreign policy. The assistance we can provide to various nations may have a long term impact on U.S. relations with these nations and their friends. (GAO and others 1976 p. 55)

From time to time, however, pragmatic state policy would be defied and embarrassed in episodes of private compassion. The NGOs Save the Children (1919) and Oxfam (1942) were both originally forged in fires of outrage at the suffering caused by military blockades imposed by the British government (de Waal 1997 p. 67; Walker and Maxwell 2009 pp. 24-25). Many other NGOs were shaped through the provision of relief to secessionist Biafra in 1967-8 in defiance of Nigeria and their home-country governments (de Waal 1997 pp. 72-77). A consortium led by Oxfam succeeded in delivering relief inside Vietnamese-controlled Cambodia after the 1979 ousting of Pol Pot, despite US opposition (Walker and Maxwell 2009 pp. 49-51). The compassion-firestorm stoked up by Band Aid and Live Aid during the 1984-5 Ethiopian famine forced Western governments to applaud the sending of assistance which benefitted a Soviet Bloc regime (de Waal 1997 pp. 121-127).

Events like these, involving widespread popular mobilization at home, made it increasingly hard for rich liberal-state governments to stay aloof from concerns about the fate of human lives in disasters. At the end of World War II they greatly increased their stakes in the ideology of humanitarianism, crystallizing a conception of 'crimes against humanity' for use in the Nuremburg and Tokyo trials (Maguire 1995), and implying a promise of concern for human security under the terms of the UN Convention and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This buying-in to a lofty discourse, while never forcing on them specific obligations to aid, made it difficult to avoid beneficent gestures, including regular support to the main UN agencies that handled disaster relief: the Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). In the era of decolonization, governments formed departments to disburse foreign aid, often making 'relief' a different administrative category from 'development' assistance and increasingly describing the former as 'humanitarian' (Forsythe 1989 pp. 66-67).

Their commitment to humanitarian aid became greater in the 1990s, as a corollary of the end of the Cold War and the new institutions, precedents and powers described in Sections 1.2.2 and 1.2.3 above. It is now common practice for donor states to describe their aid-giving as a morally-mandated activity (Riddell 2007 pp. 139-142). The historical development of the practices of state donorship, with the moral rhetoric that has often surrounded them, might be seen as a process forming an international norm. For Clare Short, speaking before a parliamentary select committee in 1998, it was obvious that 'of course, humanitarian aid must be delivered when people are hungry' (Wells and others 1998b Question 2), an utterance which the committee took to express 'a basic moral truth…worth restating categorically' (Wells and others 1998a p. 41).

Such statements, doubtless reflecting the beliefs and feelings of many in rich states, convey a strong expectation that their governments should be ready to supply the necessary resources. But any norm of international state assistance is still only diffuse and soft; there is no legal responsibility or formal accountability for life-saving in such situations (Darcy and Hofmann 2003 p. 60). It is significant that although the dictum 'humanitarian aid must be delivered when people are hungry' sounds like a categorical maxim, it uses the passive rather than the active voice, evading specification of where the burden of responsibility lies. Since it runs against the logic of the liberal economic

system, in which individuals have strong rights to hold on to previously-acquired property, and hungry people often cannot raise much effective demand (Sen 1981), something stronger may be needed.

After all, in relation to amounts of wealth on one side, and suffering on the other, the quantity of humanitarian aid is small. In 1998, average gross national product (GNP) was $23,000 per person among the billion or so people in the group of states (including the traditional donors) classed as enjoying 'high human development' (UNDP 2000 p. 205). At the same time, GNP was only $280 per person among the two-thirds of a billion in the 'low human development' countries, including Sudan (ibid.). Humanitarian aid given by donor countries for all disasters that year averaged little more than $5 per donor citizen (Randel and German 2003 p. 94). Of that, about 30 cents was due to the funding of the Consolidated Appeal in Sudan: funding which (it will be shown) was disbursed too slowly to avert tens of thousands of famine deaths.

1.3 Introduction to the 1998 Sudan famine

1.3.1 Historical background

The site of the 1998 famine, a northerly part of southern Sudan which may loosely be identified with 'Bahr al-Ghazal',[3] has suffered from predation and underdevelopment ever since the region was penetrated and annexed by Mohammed Ali, the ruler of Egypt, in the 1840s.[4] The extracted wealth, mainly embodied at first as slaves and ivory, and latterly more as cattle and various types of constrained cheap labour, has been transmitted northwards. Under the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium (which effectively meant rule by Great Britain), from 1898 to 1955, Sudan's South came to be treated as a separate unit within the country for purposes of internal policy-making and administration. Whereas the population of the North mostly comprised Muslims with varying degrees of Arab heredity and culture, the South was occupied by peoples of unambiguously African ancestry, traditions and religious beliefs. It lagged behind the

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[3] An exposition of the famine area and of 'Bahr al-Ghazal' is presented in Section 2.1.2. Meanwhile a sense of the location may quickly be obtained from Map 1 on page xi.

[4] The background history of southern Sudan described in this paragraph is synthesised from many authorities. See especially Gray (1971), Deng (1995), Holt and Daly (2000), and Johnson (2003).

North in most aspects of modernization, including the formation of a local bourgeoisie and the economic structure that would have been needed to sustain it. During most of the period of their rule the British failed to prioritize a reduction in this regional disparity.; indeed, in some ways they increased it. While the administration severely restricted the work of Christian missionaries in the North in order to reduce resentment of foreign rule and minimize the potential for social conflicts there, in the South the missionaries were encouraged. They provided civilizing influence of a kind that would have been hard and expensive for the government. This development strategy was often seen as a work of several generations, but by the end of the Second World War, the inevitability of conceding Sudanese independence pressed on the foreign rulers with disconcerting haste. Shortly before they left, a series of mutinies, killings and riots began in the South, among people resentful of the preponderance of Northerners in government and fearful of a new era of domination. These led gradually to widespread rebellion. A peace agreement in 1972 accorded the South a regional government of its own, but this was increasingly overridden and eventually dismantled by the powers in Khartoum in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Civil war broke out again in southern Sudan in 1983.

During the new phase of war, administration by the Government in much of the South became confined to enclaves around towns in which the economy was dominated by the army (African Rights 1997 pp. 236-261). People in the rural areas tried to make a living from cultivating crops, rearing animals, marginal hunting and gathering; but their livelihoods were disrupted by a loss of trading opportunities, military recruitment (often forcible), armed extortion, attack and pillage by either of the main warring parties or any of the flourishing militias (Fielding and others 2000). Many migrated to become refugees in neighbouring countries or institutionalized as 'internally displaced persons' (IDPs) in the North. In 1988 a major famine reached its climax in Bahr al-Ghazal, caused largely by systematic asset-stripping on the part of forces aligned to the Government (Keen 1994). It was a disaster that developed on the edge of the international humanitarian community's collective consciousness, coming to its attention in a big way only with the arrival of large numbers of horrifically emaciated famine migrants at the border of the North (Article 19 1990 Section 2.8; Keen 1994 pp. 173-196; Burr and Collins 1995 pp. 129-134).

1.3.2 The institution of OLS

The scandal of the 1988 famine spurred the creation of OLS in 1989 (Keen 1994 p. 203). As explained in Section 1.2.2 above, OLS was a pioneering example of negotiated humanitarian access. Under the aegis of the UN, foreign aid organizations gained access to rebel-held areas of the Sudan, with a degree of assent from both the Government of Sudan (GOS) and the insurgent Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A). Although OLS was originally formulated as a six-month crisis response programme (GOS and UN 1989), at the end of this term many humanitarian needs were clearly still unmet, and the situation that created them persisted. The idea of using relief operations as a stimulus for conflict resolution had been present from the first, yet the conflict was still far from resolved. Many in the international community were unwilling to let the programme drop, despite marked reluctance to renew its mandate on the side of the GOS (Burr and Collins 1995). GOS frequently stated its fears that relief operations in the rebel-held areas were assisting the insurgency (Karim and others 1996 pp. 13, 36-38), and would have liked to close them down. But physically it was powerless to prevent at least some agencies from working there, and legally it stopped short of total anathematization of OLS probably because this would have outraged international opinion leading to adverse consequences (Karim and others 1996 pp. 21-22, 41-46). So aid agencies, backed more or less enthusiastically by liberal-state donors, continued to work in the rebel-held areas, both within and outside OLS, with only a slender claim to legal right (see Section 3.4.1), and in a humanitarian space that was far from ideal. Given its dependence on an ever-shifting balance of political pressures rather than an authoritative blueprint, it is perhaps less accurate to call OLS a 'negotiated access agreement' than an 'informal safe-area programme' (Karim and others 1996 pp. 21-22).

From the end of 1992 OLS presented itself as a framework for comprehensive relief in southern Sudan – including both government- and rebel-held areas – putting forth integrated needs assessments, appeals and reports that gave the appearance of spanning most of the area (Karim and others 1996 pp. 15-17). OLS also worked in some parts of the North where there were displaced Southerners. The bifurcation of OLS operations between Northern and Southern Sectors (that is to say between work, on the one hand, in areas under the authority of GOS whether in northern or southern Sudan, and, on the other hand, in areas of southern Sudan controlled by rebels) made for administrative and

political awkwardness. In order to protect the Southern Sector from GOS attempts to control it, operational leadership was put in the hands of a Nairobi office of UNICEF (whose organizational mandate, uniquely among UN agencies, specifically allowed it to work in rebel-held areas) while the Northern Sector was under the UN's Co-ordinator for Emergency Relief Operations (UNCERO) in Khartoum, a position traditionally combined with that of the Resident Representative of the UN Development Programme (UNDP). The UNCERO was nominally the overall head of OLS but had little direct authority over the co-ordinator of the Southern Sector. Both Northern and Southern Sector organizations faced abrasive pressures in having to make operational arrangements with local authorities. Their respective personnel both at managerial and field level suspected their colleagues of compromising strict humanitarian neutrality, and there was insufficient common ground on which to combat this impression or come to terms with the reality of it. It will be seen in later chapters that this had grave consequences for the relief of the Bahr al-Ghazal famine in 1998.

1.3.3 The famine and the aid response[5]

Bahr al-Ghazal, particularly its northern part, was the most difficult densely-populated area for OLS and other relief agencies to reach. Train and truck convoys from the North to Wau were few and far between: always beset by logistical difficulties and weak accountability of contractors and distribution authorities, which often resulted in the disappearance of large quantities of food. Truck convoys through SPLM/A territory from the Uganda border were similarly problematic and consequently sparse. The great majority of relief supplies to reach the rural areas were flown in from Lokichoggio, beginning in 1993. These were nevertheless most of the time very far from meeting the assessed needs. Part of the problem was that relief deliveries became targets of raids by GOS-backed militia, especially one under the command of General Kerubino Kwanyin Bol, a former SPLM/A commander who had defected to the Government side. In 1997 the militia devastation of the area was augmented by the effects of a major SPLM/A offensive which saw the capture of five GOS-held garrison towns in Bahr al-Ghazal, resulting in widespread displacement and economic disruption. People's struggle to

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[5] This sub-section condenses, for introductory purposes, material presented in more detail in Chapters 2 and 3.

survive was in any case made harder that year by unfavourable weather conditions, which have been associated with the global El Nino phenomenon. The main harvest was poor, and several agencies warned of the exceptional vulnerability of the population in the year ahead.

These conditions of vulnerability were turned into an acute crisis by surprise SPLA attacks at the end of January 1998 on GOS garrison towns in northern Bahr al-Ghazal: especially the one on Wau, the largest and most important town in the region. Kerubino Kwanyin was the key figure in this, too. Turning coat again back to the rebels, along with his troops while in the town's enclave, he apparently attempted to spearhead a capture from the inside. But the attempt failed, and the fighting and reprisals that followed caused tens of thousands of people to flee out of Wau. They were able to carry very little, and thus immediately became dependent on the surrounding rural population, a population whose livelihoods were already under great stress. But relief in adequate quantities was very slow to arrive. The only practical way to send it was by air, but hardly had the OLS emergency response got underway when GOS imposed a ban on humanitarian flights to Bahr al-Ghazal. The ban was relaxed three weeks later, to the extent of letting aid staff and supplies be transported to a handful of locations. Geographical flight restrictions were almost entirely lifted after two months, at the end of March. There still remained a limitation in the form of a requirement to obtain a special license for each plane to be used in the operation. At the beginning of April, the largest plane in use was a single Lockheed C-130 ('Hercules'), and permission to fly a second one was being applied for.

Meanwhile, liberal-state donor responses to appeals for funding from UN and other aid agencies were meagre, either at the time of the initial crisis of displacement or in the aftermath of the annual Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal which was launched in mid-February. Donor representatives later explained that they required more specific information on which to act, and the flight restrictions made this information hard to obtain. Some also lamented the great expense of air transport, and looked for a renewed political agreement which, echoing the rhetoric of the 1989 OLS Plan of Action, would allow relief to be transported through 'corridors of tranquillity' overland across war lines from the North. The donors only started committing relief resources on a large scale at the end of April, three months after the exodus from Wau. The timing of this

breakthrough was connected with a trip to Africa by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, which appeared to produce a new level of co-operation on humanitarian access. Annan subsequently appealed personally for aid funding. These things were spurred by the growing intensity of international news media coverage, which was in turn partly fed by the emerging availability of emaciated human bodies to be photographed.

The present thesis also argues that donor's earlier reluctance to respond to warning information, and their ineffectuality in pursuing humanitarian access, resulted partly from prior political commitments. There is evidence, in particular, that the US (by far the largest international food aid donor) was caught by indecision over whether to back a state-sovereignty-respecting relief operation under the UN, or an alternative that conveyed a posture of greater antagonism toward GOS. At the same time, the UK, which held the presidency – and perhaps led the tone – of the EU in the first half of 1998, seems to have placed too much faith in the potential for calm technocratic management to control the situation.

But for many lives in Bahr al-Ghazal, the surge of donation in May was too late. Pouring money into a previously resource-starved operation could not cause it to scale up instantly. Now that more planes were permitted, it was hard to obtain them quickly in the world market. Other logistical processes such as aircraft fuel supply and storage facilities were needed. Food aid had to be diverted from other programmes. It was necessary at short notice to find hundreds of additional aid agency staff, and give them inductions or more basic training. At the same time, management infrastructure had to be developed. All this took time, and the rush that it involved led to inefficiency. Not all of the food borrowed from other programmes was suitable for famine victims in Sudan. The inexperience (local or absolute) of hastily-recruited staff was a handicap, and the systems to support and manage them were often matters of improvisation. Exigency was not the only cause of the problems. The system of relief distribution, based on that already established between aid agencies, the SPLM/A and community leaders, came to be openly recognised as grotesquely flawed when a joint Task Force was commissioned to investigate why distributions appeared not to be benefiting many of the most desperate people (Task Force 1998). Attempts by agencies to single out the most vulnerable and put the goods into their hands as individuals or families had been resisted or subverted by the SPLM/A and chiefs. The latter were able to collect the relief

back in when the foreign monitors left, and redistribute it. The prime victims of this process were those who were most vulnerable in the first place: those without strong political and social links, which meant strangers (that is, the displaced), widows and orphans. Estimates of the number of people who died due to the famine must be treated with great caution, but it was certainly at least in the tens of thousands.

1.4 FOCUS OF RESPONSIBILITY IN THE MAIN PUBLICATIONS ON THE FAMINE

The focus of the present thesis on traditional donor states as bearers of responsibility for disaster relief differentiates it from the two weightiest English-language monographs on the 1998 Sudan famine: a Human Rights Watch (HRW) report by Jemera Rone (Rone 1999), and a lengthy discussion paper by Luka Biong Deng published by the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) at Sussex University (Deng 1999). Both of these are impressively-researched and very valuable works, on which the present thesis has drawn extensively. But they have their particular biases. Famine deaths have diverse contributory causes, and a study may quite reasonably concentrate on some of these at the expense of others. The special focus of the present thesis can be justified partly by reference to the gap and imbalance in the literature of the famine. Not only that: it also contends that the imbalance is important in itself and that it has systematic causes. The following brief survey of these two previous works will help to make the point clear.

The HRW report summarises the blame for the suffering and mortality in Bahr al-Ghazal 1998 as lying 'primarily with the Sudanese government and militias and opposition forces that precipitated the famine and deliberately diverted or looted food from the starving or blocked relief deliveries' (Rone 1999 p. 1). This sharp focus on powers-in-the land is understandable given the traditions of HRW, an organization whose initial activity as Helsinki Watch mainly involved monitoring the treatment of dissidents by the Soviet Union and its satellite states from a Western viewpoint. The bulk of the report uses meticulous research and documentation to link the creation and perpetuation of famine to particular acts of the kinds contrary to IHL, such as attacks against civilians and their property and means of assistance. It addresses many recommendations to the warring parties, mostly urging them to cease violations of IHL, institute preventative measures, and facilitate monitoring (pp. 7-9). The international community is urged in various ways to require compliance from the combatants in these

matters, and to engage in the monitoring and dissemination of human rights and humanitarian law (pp. 9-11).

The bulleted recommendations that deal with relief aid are concerned with stopping the combatants from obstructing, stealing or otherwise manipulating it (ibid.). No recommendation is made about ensuring rapid availability of relief supplies. But the text mentions – almost in passing – that OLS had faced a 'major funding crisis' in 1997 preceded by serious underfunding in 1995 and 1996 (p. 41). The report mentions, too, that 'early responses' to the Inter-Agency Consolidated Appeal issued in February 'were also disappointing', but it states that this was 'before the extent of the famine was known' (ibid.), an excuse that will be challenged in Chapters 4 and 5 of the present thesis. There is hardly any criticism of the traditional donor states. This is in accordance with a streamlined agenda. As Marriage (2005 pp. 368-369; Marriage 2006a p. 143) has pointed out, the statement on the first page of the report blaming the government, militias and opposition forces for the famine, is presented as blowing away any idea that blame should be attributed to OLS or the international community.

Luka Biong Deng's discussion paper (Deng 1999), in contrast, focuses its criticism above all on the international humanitarian field agencies and their practices. Deng fully acknowledges the hardship caused by the fighting – indeed, as a son of the area, he shows a very intimate understanding of it – but he does not condemn the warring parties in the way of the HRW report. As a member of the SPLM/A, he naturally presents its behaviour in a comparatively favourable light, treating its war as just, and its possibilities as constrained (p. 91). He does not deny that the institutions of the SPLM/A were seriously culpable for the famine in several ways (pp. 91-92). But, when mentioning the suggestions of food aid diversion in the Task Force report, he dwells on the latter's sociological insights rather than firmly addressing the challenge to the SPLM/A's responsibility (pp. 94-5). What the present thesis describes as the major event tipping a situation of extreme vulnerability into a famine crisis – the SPLM/A's attack on the town of Wau causing the sudden displacement of perhaps 100,000 people – is embedded by Deng in a sub-section on the behaviour of grain markets, as a local cause of high prices (pp. 47-49).

Perhaps more surprising than this glossing-over is Deng's restraint in blaming GOS. Even when describing its deliberate destruction and disruption of civilian agriculture, he presents this as a tactic of counterinsurgency warfare connected with practices going back more than a hundred years (pp. 22-40 especially p. 30), a fact of life rather than an object of outrage. The culmination of the paper, however, is a set of arguments to the effect that the reason the international relief agencies failed to respond to the famine quickly enough was that the needs monitors and early warnings systems did not correctly assess the situation in the field, and hence obtain sufficient funding in time (pp. 96-104). This emphasis reflects Deng's previous experience as head of the SPLM/A's Database and Monitoring Unit. It enables Deng to bring a great deal of expertise and detailed information into play, but it also gives him an agenda of self-vindication. The Monitoring Unit, he contends, flagged up higher relief requirements at an earlier stage than did the WFP's Food Economy Assessment Unit and the international NGOs (pp. 102-103). The present thesis argues that while this may be true, the meaning of the warning information is problematic, and the assumption that low needs estimates caused the late relief response is faulty. The condemnation of international field agencies and their techniques, has the effect of reducing the pressure of criticism on the donor states. This is important, as this key message of Deng's paper has been widely disseminated through citations in other publications: repackaged and slightly reworked by Deng in several shorter pieces (Deng 2002b; 2002a; 2007), and presented by others as case study findings (Devereux 2001a p. 139; Wisner and others 2004 pp. 147-150).

1.5 Research process

This thesis represents an attempt to integrate my experience and understandings as a aid-worker with academic approaches and literature on the politics of aid. Having a practitioner background was both an asset and a liability in coming to the PhD course. It provided a legacy of primary data, insights, and contacts for research. The documentary data and remembered facts were not always reliable or objectively interesting, but at least made reference points for further investigation. Some of the apparent insights were creative pointers for building an argument; but some came to seem more like hang-ups or prejudices, forming obstacles in the path, or channelling me on profitless journeys. The resource of ready-made research contacts largely took the form of people and

organizations to which I am bound as past and future friends, collaborators and employers. For better and worse the lives and deaths of disaster victims often depend rather intimately on the actions of such people and agencies, so that exposure and critical analysis of those actions is naturally a matter of sensitivity. In seeking their help, it was hard, as a researcher, to balance responsible warnings with reassurance about the tendency of the research.

My practitioner background also militated against structuring the research process into clear phases of 'preparation', 'fieldwork' and 'writing-up'. The early part of the process was rather a matter of trying to work out what question or theme could form a worthwhile focus of interest for deploying the data, insights and contacts that I possessed. I was also concerned to find a way of thinking and writing about the issues which felt right in terms of the balances of structure and agency, moral responsibility and awareness of the contestability of moral views. I was attracted to Margaret Archer's arguments for maintaining a sense of the interplay between structure and agency in causation, but less comfortable with the ontological rigidity of her structures and agents (Archer 1995; 2000). For instance, I found it unduly restrictive to limit agents to 'collectivities sharing the same life-chances' (Archer 2000 p. 261). Whatever the ontological status of free will, the idea has a rhetorical function in the way we give form to our understandings (Finlayson 2004). Attribution of agency can be used to signify a comparative easiness of imagining alternative possibilities. Consequently, I have adopted a more fluid and ad hoc procedure than Archer, but one conscious of the implications and artifice involved in characterizing structures and agents.

Later in the process, I gradually developed the line of an answer to my research question – and the themes that were coming out of it – in view of the legacy of practitioner material, although the latter was continuously augmented by further research. Accordingly, it is most natural to begin a description of my engagement with the material by outlining my practitioner experience.

After living as a teacher in Sudan in 1987-1988, I was employed in the Khartoum office of Sudanaid, the central relief and development organization of the Catholic Church in Sudan, from September 1988 to the end of 1989. During this period I participated in the inter-agency cooperation surrounding the establishment of OLS. My post was funded by

CAFOD, the Catholic charity for relief and development in England and Wales, which was acting as lead agency on Sudan for the Caritas group of Catholic international aid organizations. I subsequently worked as an assistant on the Sudan desk for CAFOD in London, from the start of 1990 to September 1991, when I was seconded to the New Sudan Council of Churches, living in the rebel-held area of southern Sudan. In the latter part of 1992 I worked for the ecumenical consortium sending relief to southern Sudan, based out of Nairobi. For the first eight months of 1993 I was a field food monitor for WFP, posted to a number of different sites in the rebel-held areas, including Akon and Thiet in Bahr al-Ghazal. This was a time when a rapid expansion of humanitarian air access meant that such areas were regularly receiving international relief for the first time during the war.

After a serious car accident I was absent for about a year, but in October 1994 I returned to Nairobi, and worked for the next five-and-a-half years as a freelance consultant on matters relating to relief and development in the rebel-held areas of southern Sudan, frequently travelling there. It included several assignments for the south Sudan programme of Save the Children, which was particularly active in northern Bahr al-Ghazal. One other major job was research and preliminary drafting of two discussion papers for African Rights under the supervision of Alex de Waal (African Rights 1995b; 1995a). The papers were about the roles of the churches and aid agencies respectively in building civil society in the rebel-held areas. They led to participation in the research and writing of a book, *Food and power in Sudan: A critique of humanitarianism* (African Rights 1997). This activity placed me near the centre of the 1990s movement uncovering perverse dynamics and unpalatable consequences of humanitarian operations (Edkins 2000 pp. 139-152). The work of de-bunking was an important way of bringing more realism – especially *political* realism – into discussions of relief aid. But although this literature was salutary in many ways, I later became more worried that it had unintended consequences of its own. It seemed that, as one of the seminal authors has self-critically put it, 'critiques of aid have been harnessed to inaction and penny-pinching' (Keen 2008 p. 140).

Equal in importance to my employment at that time is the fact that I was socially part of a circle of aid-workers who travelled in and out of southern Sudan, and exchanged information and ideas. I did not visit Bahr al-Ghazal during the 1998 famine or work

directly on operations to relieve it, but had a great deal of contact with friends, acquaintances and organizations that did so, and so gained some depth of familiarity with conditions and events there. From October 2000 to May 2002 I managed the relief programme of the International Rescue Committee in the rebel-held area of eastern Sudan, cross-border from Eritrea, which provided a useful side-light on politicized humanitarian interventions. I have continued to do occasional research consultancy work on Sudanese topics while pursuing my doctoral research on a part-time basis.

As a consultant researcher in the 1990s, I accumulated a collection of aid agency reports, operational memoranda, press releases and bulletins, as well as newspaper cuttings. Most of these were hard copies, but they also included some electronic items received at the time by email. Some of this material bore directly on the 1998 famine, or on related matters. After deciding to make the famine the focus of my doctoral research, I sorted and reviewed this material in the light of a reading of published literature of the famine and, more generally, the politics and ethics of aid. I added to these using web-based searches. I gathered newspaper articles principally by searching databases of Newsbank and LexisNexis, provided through the library at the University of Leeds. I searched the archives individually of many news organizations and aid agencies. The Relief Web site (administered by OCHA, the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) was particularly useful as a rich source of all the types of documents mentioned above. Care had to be taken with it, however, as many of the texts were re-formatted and presented without full contextual information indicating their provenance and status. Where possible they had to be corroborated from more authentic sources, or cross-checked. This was the case with the one of the most crucial documents for the present study: the 1998 Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal, which was initially only available in a summary version. For this document I contacted Relief Web by email and they were able to supply a fuller version in an obsolete word-processor format. However, they could not provide a copy of an equally important text: the 1997-8 Annual Needs Assessment.

On a visit to Nairobi in August/September 2005, I was able to fill some gaps of this kind, and add to my collection of documents more generally, by accessing the document collections of a handful of individuals and aid agency offices. In some cases I was able

to borrow useful documents and have them photocopied; in others, I sought permission to photograph them *in situ*.

The bulk of the primary research data used in this thesis is documentary. However, while in Nairobi, I sought to fill some gaps in my knowledge and understanding using a small number of interviews. They were semi-structured interviews with some aid-workers who had played important roles in the famine relief operation. The two central ones – with the person who had been manager of WFP's Food Economy Analysis Unit at the time of the famine, and with one of the authors of the dramatic Task Force report in the midst of the crisis – were voice-recorded before being transcribed. In other cases, I judged that voice-recording would be too intimidating and/or cumbersome, and merely made notes on key points and quotations which I later transcribed.

Regarding the ethics of the research process: all but one of the interviewees cited in this research gave aural permission to be interviewed and cited, after being informed of the broad purpose of the research. I was unable at time to give them precise details of the context in which they would be quoted and the points that would be made, but made sure they were aware that my general approach to the topic was a critical one. They were willing to accept this in a spirit of understanding the potential value of such criticism. In the exceptional case, while engaged in another project in Sudan in 2008, I was given useful and credible information in a more casual conversation with a well-informed acquaintance while talking about my PhD work. I have cited this in the text as an 'interview'. I did not explicitly ask permission to cite this interlocutor and have therefore withheld the name. Here and in other respects I believe the research procedure was in accordance with the key principles of the Research Ethics Framework of the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC n.d. p. 1).

1.6 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

Following the present introductory chapter, Chapter 2 assesses the extent to which famine deaths could have been averted by earlier and better relief. This involves: a scene-setting of the way people lived amid war and aid in Bahr al-Ghazal in the mid-1990s; an account of the way that the famine emerged from the chronic disaster; and a detailed analysis of the impact of the relief operation. The chapter also considers the

extent to which the difficulties and shortcomings of the operation could have been forestalled by better-funded prevention and preparedness measures, and it examines the role that functional ignorance may have played in conjunction with scarce resources and ideological dogmatism.

Chapter 3 asks how far the identified lateness of relief should be attributed to slow response on the part of state donors. It takes a close look at the available information about the timing of donations, the gradually increasing rate of relief delivery in 1998, and the relationship between these two things. It pays particular attention to the competing hawkish narrative in which the delay was attributable to flight restrictions imposed by GOS, and to the UN's failure to overcome them promptly. The options of the UN and the international community more generally for putting pressure on GOS are examined, as is the history of what actually happened in the access negotiations. In the course of this it becomes clear that both the flight restrictions and the lateness of donations were related to a US-led policy – particularly sharp at that time – of putting pressure on the Khartoum regime as a likely state sponsor of terrorism.

The question then comes up as to whether late donor contributions in 1998 were caused by inadequate warning information from the field agencies. The existing literature contains opposing opinions about this. Chapter 4 investigates by carefully reviewing the history of the warnings and needs-assessments, and the criticisms that have been made against them by donors and academics. Finding that, from a commonsense humanistic point of view, the advance warning appears to have been adequate, it begins looking more closely at the shaping of bureaucratic knowledge by framing institutions, through an analysis of the interaction between the OLS setup and the CAP. Chapter 5 continues this scrutiny of the knowledge-production process with close examinations of the semantics and logic of the information, and of the institutional role of the Food Economy Analysis Unit in WFP. It further explores the way that political agendas corrupt the production and interpretation of information, by revisiting a cluster of controversies about the famine response that flourished particularly in the UK in mid-1998. It shows how, while the crisis response of European donors was not so directly affected by an aggressive geo-strategy as was the aid-giving of the US, it was conditioned more subtly by doctrines of New Humanitarianism and aid coherence.

The concluding chapter begins by recapitulating the way that the thesis has answered its initial research question. It goes on to develop the theme that has emerged about the functionality of apparently-dysfunctional humanitarian information. It finishes by showing the current relevance of these effects, first in the particular context of South Sudan, and then in view of the continuing global project of sustainable disaster governance.

2 FAMINE AND RELIEF IN THE FIELD

2.1 INTRODUCTION

2.1.1 Outline of this chapter

This chapter looks at the origins of the famine, how it emerged and affected the people who lived in Bahr al-Ghazal, and the impact of this on humanitarian relief operations. It asks whether the amount of suffering and death could have been reduced if the relief delivered to the field had been different in terms of timing, quantity, quality, or management. To do this it first delineates spatial and social boundaries of the famine (Section 2.1.2). It then sets the scene in the area in the mid-1990s leading up to the famine (Section 2.2). This scene is one of ongoing low-intensity warfare and equally low-intensity aid operations in which most people faced great hardship. A further section (2.3) sets out the factors which in 1997 and 1998 turned this situation into a more acute crisis. The severe phase of the famine is then narrated in terms of how it was encountered and dealt with by the international aid agencies (Section 2.4). A comparatively brief fifth section (2.5) reviews the evidence of the scale of the famine mortality, and raises the question of whether the disaster should be seen as a general phenomenon in the area, or something that afflicted a specific group of people. Before concluding, the chapter considers (Section 2.6) how the aid agencies could have been better prepared for the emergency if they had enjoyed more generous donor funding beforehand. Special attention is paid to the question of whether it would have been possible to avoid following a disastrously unrealistic model of relief distribution procedure associated with patterns of functional ignorance.

2.1.2 Location of the famine

The name 'Bahr al-Ghazal' may cause confusion; it has been applied to at least three different areas. Meaning in Arabic 'gazelle river', the phrase firstly signifies a tributary of the White Nile. Before the twentieth century this waterway provided the main access for cosmopolitan travellers into south-western Sudan, so it gave its name to the land in

that direction. This vast and initially ill-defined area was designated the province of Bahr al-Ghazal on its annexation by the ruler of Egypt in 1873 (Holt and Daly 2000 p. 68). In common with the province of Upper Nile, part of its territory was ceded to Equatoria in 1948 when southern Sudan was re-organised into three provinces. In 1976 these three provinces were each divided into two; in Bahr al-Ghazal the name was retained for the north-western part, while the remainder was designated as Lakes (in Arabic, al-Buhayrat) Province (Law 2007). Map 1 on page xi shows these divisions. In 1994, GOS introduced new boundary changes and a federal system, as a result of which the 1976 area of the province was mostly divided between the states of Western Bahr al-Ghazal and Northern Bahr al-Ghazal, while the 1976 area of Lakes was split into the states of Lakes and Warab. Meanwhile, the SPLM/A used the 1948 boundaries in establishing Bahr al-Ghazal as a constituent state of the 'liberated areas', which it sub-divided into the counties of Yirol, Rumbek, Tonj, Wau, Raga, Aweil East, Aweil West, Gogrial, Twic and Abyei[6]. The conflicting administrative categories of GOS and SPLM/A created a terminological problem for OLS in public documents. It could adhere to neither schema without appearing to take sides. As a compromise for southern Sudan it reverted to the 1976 system. Aid workers and others, though, often still thought of Bahr al-Ghazal as meaning the larger (1948) region, and referred to the non-Lakes part as 'northern' Bahr al-Ghazal. This is the usage adopted in the present thesis.

While the meaning of Bahr al-Ghazal can be ambiguous, the spatial extent of the famine is also subject to uncertainty, due both to the lack of clear criteria for 'famine' and the lack of comprehensive and accurate data (Howe 2003 pp. 168-170). It so happens that the symptoms of famine were most concentrated in northern Bahr al-Ghazal; but they extended to other parts of the region, and areas adjoining it to the north. A more detailed indication of the famine space is given by Map 1 when studied together with the table of famine events and conditions reported by location, which is provided in Annexe 1 (p. 208).

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[6] Abyei District was not within Bahr al-Ghazal under the 1948 definition. It had been transferred to Kordofan by the colonial government in 1905. But this has long been contested by southern Sudanese.

It would be wrong to imagine the famine alighting on a physical space in which the identity of its occupants was merely a matter of chance. The afflicted area was home mostly to people of Dinka ethnicity; and what made the famine a unified phenomenon was partly that its victim communities shared a similar way of life and were considerably integrated with each other economically. More importantly, they shared a position in the dynamics of conflict. When the various sections of Dinka are classified together as a single tribe, it forms the most populous and extensive of the tribes in southern Sudan, covering a great proportion of Bahr al-Ghazal and Upper Nile (Johnson 2003 pp. 51-53). It has often been seen as constituting a dominant bloc in the polity of South Sudan, and within the SPLM/A (ibid.). This fact was both an effect and a cause of the long-term pattern of violence in the area, and it played a large part in preparing the conditions and precipitating the famine. Ethnicity also to a great extent set the boundaries for the population displacement that spread the impact of famine from one locality to another. These processes will be described in Sections 2.2 and 2.3 below.

In the mid-1990s, most of the rural Dinka areas of Bahr al-Ghazal were under the sway of the SPLM/A, while Wau and some smaller towns were controlled by GOS. The western part of the region was occupied mainly by Fertit and other non-Dinka, and was held by GOS. In the north, the line of territorial control between the SPLM/A and GOS approximated to that between Bahr al-Ghazal and the regions of Darfur and Kordofan. It also corresponded roughly to the occupation of Dinka on one side, and of Arabic-speaking cattle-herding groups (collectively known as *Baggara*) on the other. In the west, Dinka-occupied Bahr al-Ghazal adjoined Nuer-habited Upper Nile. Nuer areas at this time tended to be dominated by armed groups that had broken away from the SPLM/A. In southern parts of Bahr al-Ghazal there lived many Jur people, often in close proximity with Dinka and under the power of the SPLM/A. Further south, the region of Western Equatoria was largely controlled by the SPLM/A, although historically it was not a home of Dinka. Many Dinka had moved there during the war, often as soldiers or their families, but such migrations had sometimes caused friction with the local population (African Rights 1995b; Phelan and Wood 2006 pp. 20-22).

Other parts of southern Sudan also experienced acute hunger and related mortality in 1998, but these happenings may be relegated to the background for present purposes because they were smaller in scale and – while they shared some common features in

the broader humanitarian emergency that was recognised in southern Sudan from the mid-1980s to 2005 and beyond – they were in many ways detached from the more exceptional and dramatic events that concerned the above-defined region. Nevertheless it is notable that aid agencies in these other parts of Sudan often associated their programme areas with the crisis when it became an international news story. CARE, for instance, which worked in a neighbouring area of Upper Nile, issued a press release in early May 1998, on its response to 'the crisis', mentioning the very high child malnutrition rates it was encountering (CARE 1998).

2.2 Conditions in Dinka areas of Bahr al-Ghazal in the mid-1990s

2.2.1 Lives and livelihoods

There are no satisfactory overall surveys of human welfare in Bahr al-Ghazal or any other large areas of southern Sudan in the mid-1990s. On the basis of 1973 census data it has been inferred that average life expectancy at that time was about 34 years (de Waal 2005 [1989] p. 185). In 2004, a study put the average birth life expectancy for southern Sudan as a whole as 42 (NSCSE and UNICEF 2004). Given the evidence presented below about the particular hardships of Bahr al-Ghazal in the 1990s it is likely that the figure for that time and place was closer to 34 than 42: at any rate, a grotesque level by modern international standards.

In the mid-1990s the Dinka people in rural areas of Bahr al-Ghazal were gaining most of their subsistence and tradable income from (in roughly equal proportions) growing crops, rearing livestock, gathering wild foods, and catching fish (FEAU 1996b; Deng 1999 pp. 33-40; Fielding and others 2000). The relative importance of each of these activities tended to vary according to the location within the region and the wealth of the household concerned. Production was mainly for direct household consumption, but members of poorer households would often provide labour to their neighbours, and some produce would be used to trade for items such as clothing, tools, utensils and medicines. Although trade had diminished greatly while the war brought peril and high taxation to the transporters of goods, basic necessary manufactured items were often available in local markets supplied from GOS-held areas and Uganda. Goods distributed by relief agencies would also sometimes be used for trade as well as direct consumption

(Madsen 1997). The rural economy was doubtless also affected by people's migration to the GOS-held garrison towns and to northern Sudan, to work and/or receive relief. Some of this may have been seasonal, but a larger-scale trend has also been detected: net emigration from 1990 to 1992, and return from 1993 onwards (Karim and others 1996 pp. 160-165). If workers were able to send remittances or bring wealth when they came back, such sources of income seldom showed up in food economy reports, but the return of able-bodied migrants has been suggested as an explanation for (as well as a result of) a generally improved food economy in 1994/5 (Karim and others 1996 p. 163).

The GOS-held towns in the Dinka-populated areas of Bahr al-Ghazal at the start of 1997 included Wau, Aweil, Gogrial, Tonj, Rumbek and Yirol. Of these Wau, whose population (including a periphery of 'indigenous villages' and 'peace villages' or camps of displaced people) oscillated around 100,000, was by far the largest and most important.[7] The economies of these towns were largely driven by funds and goods sent from Khartoum to sustain the army and public administration. Most of the Dinka civilians living in those enclaves survived by selling firewood, fodder and cheap labour, and occasionally receiving relief goods from the North (African Rights 1997 pp. 247-253; HCU 1998d).

Populations in both SPLM/A- and GOS-held areas were provided with very few public services such as healthcare, clean water and sanitation. Where these were accessible it was usually with the assistance of international aid agencies. The extent of aid operations is described in Section 2.2.3 below. Their inadequacy was partly reflected in a serious outbreak of cholera in rural areas of northern Bahr al-Ghazal in 1996 (Macaskill 2000 p. 188).

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[7] Wau also contained a considerable number of the Fertit people, who occupied the region east of the town and were generally more supportive to GOS and hostile to the SPLM/A than the Dinka (Rone 1999 pp. 18-36). It must also be observed that many of the soldiers in the Sudan army, particularly in the lower ranks, were Dinka.

2.2.2 Warfare

Livelihoods were made precarious by frequent armed raiding that targeted civilians and their assets. Although intermittent raiding between Dinka and their cattle-owning neighbours – *Baggara* to the north and Nuer to the east – has a long history, it became far more harmful when coupled with the civil war and cheap availability of firearms (Jok and Hutchinson 1999). GOS incorporated this in its strategy for ruling Sudan's peripheries, sometimes allying itself with local militia and sometimes semi-regularizing them under the designation 'Patriotic Defence Forces' (PDF) (de Waal 1993 pp. 21-22; HRW 1994). Populations thought to support armed opposition groups – as were the Dinka in the present case – have been targets of killing, impoverishment and displacement.

After the 1983 formation of the SPLM/A, the GOS started using *Baggara* militias known as *murahaleen* to fight the war in Bahr al-Ghazal (de Waal 1993 pp. 21-22). Their assaults on the local Dinka population, while they almost certainly turned hearts and minds toward the SPLM/A, reduced the economic support that the rebels could draw from an area which was too vast to be easily protected. At the same time, the raiding and its effects on food and livestock markets provided ways to enrich individuals and groups affiliated with the GOS (Keen 1994 pp. 76-128). It was a major cause of a particularly devastating famine in 1988 (ibid.). Towards the end of 1988, a stronger SPLA presence, capable of restricting access to vital pasture land, forced some of the *Baggara* tribes to negotiate peace with their Dinka neighbours (Johnson and Prunier 1993 p. 132). The agreement succeeded in reducing tribal conflicts as such, into the mid-1990s (Karim and others 1996 p. 162). But a new pattern of *murahaleen* raiding emerged, in which *Baggara* men were recruited as PDF fighters, often without the approval of their tribal authorities, as a force which would primarily protect the train line connecting Wau to northern Sudan (Kemble and others 2002 pp. 26-27). Raiding was now firstly intended to intimidate and displace populations along the line of the track, so as to make SPLA sabotage and interceptions more difficult. Train passages (which occurred only a few times each year) and flanking horseback rampages supported each other. The *murahaleen* would take the opportunities of loot, and would often abduct people during attacks, to be hostages or slaves (Burr 1998; Rone 1999 pp. 28-29; Kemble and others 2002).

In the mid-1990s the *murahaleen* were geographically complemented by other militias within the GOS proxy-war strategy (Deng 2002c Figure 6.1). From 1991 a split in the SPLM/A led to the formation of a number of smaller rebel factions, most of which soon reached an accommodation with GOS, often effectively functioning as additional pro-Government militias. Here too, new life was breathed into old patterns of feuding and resource-conflict along ethnic lines, this time pitting Nuer against Dinka in the eastern and southern parts of Bahr al-Ghazal. But one splinter faction central to the story of the 1998 famine, was mainly composed of local Dinka people. Led by a former member of the SPLA's High Command, Kerubino Kuanyin Bol, this group was able from 1994 to 1997 to move adroitly through the countryside of northern Bahr al-Ghazal, stealing, wrecking, and abducting. It would retreat for shelter in GOS garrison towns, most usually Kerubino's hometown, Gogrial (Rone 1999 pp. 14-15; Jaspars 1999 p. 13). As with the *murahaleen*, there is evidence that Nuer and Kerubino militia raids were co-ordinated with GOS operations, as when they provided diversionary attacks at the time of the movement of a train to Wau in October 1997 (Deng 1999 p. 42). Likewise, the military convoys which twice a year relieved the smaller GOS garrisons (such as Rumbek and Gogrial) from Wau, were thus turned into occasions of havoc for the rural populations in the area (Task Force 1998 p. 52; Mambo and others 1999).

Besides the immediate mortality and suffering that it caused, militia raiding affected local people's livelihoods in several ways (Karim and others 1996 pp. 164-165; Fielding and others 2000 pp. 23-25). Firstly, it brought a loss of labour power compared with consumption requirements. Young men, where present, might be killed or maimed. Young women and healthy children were liable to abduction and perhaps enslavement (Kemble and others 2002). Consequently, stronger people tended to migrate from the area, whether to the cities and agricultural schemes of the North, or to other parts of the SPLA-held South (Karim and others 1996 p. 163). Many of the men became soldiers in the SPLA (OLS 1997c p. 87). Secondly, there was a direct loss of goods: huts, animals, standing crops, stored grain, seeds, tools and more. Sites of relief distribution were targeted in the raids. Third, there was restriction of access to public resources. Some areas became too risky for the grazing of cattle, or gathering of wild foods, or fishing. Wells were wrecked or poisoned. Health centres, veterinary services and other facilities set up by NGOs were destroyed, disrupted and made untenable. Fourth, the sudden

shocks of raids resulted in economic inefficiency and disintegration. People had to resort to short-term survival strategies, such as seeking support from neighbours and aid agencies rather than engaging in stable productive activity. For people who usually cultivated, too many risks became associated with the investment of time in the fields to bring forth a good crop. Cattle were moved to remote areas (often the southern parts of Bahr al-Ghazal) and thus could not play their usual part in the local economy. Reduced access to milk probably adversely affected nutrition, particularly of children. Economic losses generally were multiplied through the effects of poor diet on people's abilities to work. Fifthly, there have been suggestions that these things further resulted in loss of social capital especially for poorer folk. It became harder for them to gain employment or to marry into richer families, as these retrenched or migrated to safer regions (Interview 2005a). The hardness of the times was a reason for people to excuse themselves from helping their relatives and neighbours (Fielding and others 2000 p. 24).

2.2.3 Aid operations

The SPLM/A-held parts of Bahr al-Ghazal were among the most difficult and expensive areas for relief agencies to reach in Sudan, and the most prone to disruptive fighting. Hence aid projects were slow to be set up there, and patchy in effect, even compared with other regions of southern Sudan. Towards the end of the 1988 famine, ICRC started work in Akon and Yirol. When the first phase of OLS was underway, during 1989, ICRC's were the only humanitarian operations in SPLM/A areas that GOS permitted to be supplied by air. Thus they were the only projects with expatriate field staff in SPLM/A parts of Bahr al-Ghazal and concomitantly the only locations receiving substantial aid in these areas. International agencies were more unwilling here than in Eritrea and Tigray in the late 1980s and early 1990s, to entrust large quantities of relief resources to the rebel movements, since an early attempt at this had resulted in the disappearance of the supplies (African Rights 1997 pp. 87-88). The 1989 flight permission for ICRC was revoked amid apparent attempts by GOS to discontinue international aid to the South at the end of 1989 (Duffield and others 1995 p. 159; Burr and Collins 1995 pp. 200, 292).

The railway from the North to Wau was not an effective way of supplying aid to that town and Aweil, let alone to SPLM/A areas (OLS 1998d; see also Burr and Collins

1995 pp. 198-199 for a detailed account of the train project in 1989.). OLS had tried to use it several times from 1989 to 1995, never achieving a satisfactory result. It was a difficult undertaking for several reasons. Train convoys had to be separated from their usual military and *murahaleen* attachments. There was a suspicion that money spent repairing old rolling-stock for a humanitarian journey would in effect subsidize a military one at a later date. Preparation of the train and its load was usually delayed by many weeks or months; further delays occurred in transit. The journey time was typically four to six weeks (HCU 1998d). It was usually unclear how far the delays were a result of technical difficulties, the chances of war, or deliberate obstruction by powerful actors such as the military and merchants, who had strong vested interests in controlling supplies and logistical routes to Wau (Keen 1994). Supplies were often lost through looting or in theft by parties unknown. It was hard to arrange secure collection by genuinely-needy civilian populations en route, given that the rail corridor was a domain of *murahaleen* raiders and occasional SPLM/A saboteurs. OLS gave up using the train route in 1995, after consecutive fiascos that May and the previous year (HCU 1998d).

For similar reasons, motor-vehicle access to Wau and other GOS-held areas of Bahr al-Ghazal was extremely problematic (Burr and Collins 1995 pp. 75-81), and motor convoys from the North never successfully served SPLM/A-held areas on a humanitarian basis. From the South, even when patterns of military control allowed it, road delivery was frustrated by long distances on bad roads. The route from Mombasa (the nearest available international sea port) to Bahr al-Ghazal involved not only more than a thousand kilometres on the poor roads of Kenya and Uganda, but also over five hundred more in the war zone of southern Sudan, where landmines were known to be sown in profusion, where no roads were metalled and few even amounted to clean tracks, and where trucks could break down or become embedded in mud for weeks. In 1992 at least two agencies tried to send overland lorry convoys (Duffield and others 1995 pp. 159-162; Karim and others 1996 p. 160), but the obstacles that they faced made each convoy a project lasting several months, and few were attempted. The pattern of GOS territorial control in the South put such overland access out of the question between 1993 and 1997. When, in March 1998, three vehicles chartered by the Save the Children Fund (SCF) brought high-nutrition food and some non-food items to Lunyaker near the southernmost point of Gogrial County (OLS 1998h), it was thought

to be the furthest north that OLS trucks had ever reached on the west side of the Nile (USAID 1998a). WFP had delivered some food by truck to a slightly more southerly location at the end of February 1998 (WFP 1998b). But the imminence of the rainy season meant that these feats could not be replicated until the very end of the year, when the ground was beginning to become hard again.

Most of the relief supplies to reach the rural areas of Bahr al-Ghazal in the 1990s were flown in by OLS from Lokichoggio, beginning in 1993. This method of delivery was subject to interruptions due to episodes of fighting which prompted GOS denials of flight clearance, or which made aid agencies withdraw from affected localities of their own accord. It was also relatively expensive; and this was especially important during the period from 1994 to 1997 when funding was very tight (see Section 5.3). As a result, projects at that time were very far from meeting the assessed needs. A review of OLS in 1996 (Karim and others 1996 pp. 160-165) found that in 1995 only 19 per cent of the stated relief food requirement in Bahr al-Ghazal was fulfilled. In January 1996 it was estimated that only four per cent of the population of northern Bahr al-Ghazal had access to basic health services, as compared with 100 per cent in Western Equatoria (Macaskill 2000 p. 187 citing an OLS assessment). A report for the official Danish aid agency reported that very few of the immunization centres set up in the region since 1992 were still working by 1998 (Buchanan-Smith and others 1999 Section 14.2).

The OLS Review asked itself why, in view of the food aid undershoot, large-scale starvation had not occurred. Its answer was that the needs assessors had underestimated the ability of people to survive by adding wild foods to their diet and running down their productive assets (Karim and others 1996 p. 161). It also argued that, particularly in 1994-5, the food aid had a greater impact than anticipated in encouraging people to stay at home and cultivate rather than to migrate, and that this had knock-on benefits in terms of strengthening the exchange relationships between households and between communities (pp. 161-164). It feared, however, that these benign effects were being reversed by an increased incidence of militia attacks, often targeted at aid deliveries (pp. 164-165).

By the end of 1997, about 20 international NGOs were managing projects in SPLM/A areas of Bahr al-Ghazal, alongside UNICEF and WFP. ICRC was not present, as it had

no agreement for operation in Sudan between November 1996 and March 1998 (IRIN 1998d). The 1998 UN Consolidated Appeal document (OCHA 1998a pp. 103-120) lists 14 NGOs working or intending to work in these areas, indicating that most of these were engaged in at least three out of seven listed sectoral activities[8]. NGOs working in Bahr al-Ghazal but not listed by OLS included the openly-partisan Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) and several linked to Sudanese churches. Given the size of Bahr al-Ghazal this means the coverage was extremely sparse, particularly in the northern part. As for the GOS-held areas, the Consolidated Appeal listed 12 NGOs, mostly Sudan-headquartered and multi-sectoral in ambition. Their operations were concentrated very much in the Wau and Aweil enclaves.

2.3 THE EMERGENCE OF THE FAMINE

Lives and livelihoods in Bahr al-Ghazal in 1997 became even more perilous than before, due to the behaviour of both the weather and the war. Regarding the weather, although the overall quantity of rain in the year was approximately normal, its timing was not (FAO and WFP 1997; Deng 1999 pp. 43-46). There was unusually high rainfall in April, just before what was supposed to be the main planting season; but May and June were unseasonably dry. July, when the first crop was still being harvested and before the second was planted was wet, but August and September were dry. Deng (ibid.) has associated this abnormality with the El Nino weather system, observed across the globe that year.

In the war, several actions contributed to increasing hardship. 1997 saw a remarkable series of conquests by the SPLA. Between March and June an offensive rolled forward from the Ugandan border capturing a string of garrison towns including – in Bahr al-Ghazal – Rumbek, Tonj, Warrap, Kit and Yirol. The push was repulsed, however, at Gogrial, where Kerubino was based. Around these places great strain was put upon the rural economy: firstly, by disruption and taxation due to the presence of the attacking army (Deng 1999 p. 43; Interview 2005d); secondly by pre-emptive depradation and later reprisals and retreats by the defending forces; and thirdly by the loss of the

[8] The seven were: health/nutrition, education, agriculture, livestock/veterinary, water/sanitation, relief and social development.

Government garrisons and the economic activities they generated using goods and money from Khartoum. A monitoring office linked to the SPLM/A estimated that almost 300,000 people in Bahr al-Ghazal were displaced at some time during 1997 (SRRA DMO 1998 pp. 2-3). Some of these were returnees to Rumbek area after the SPLA conquests (Task Force 1998 p. 51). It may be that after its successes the SPLM/A force brought some tradable goods from outside, and that the capture of the towns released in the short term some additional resources in the form of loot. But these advantages are unlikely on the whole to have outweighed the harm; and, perhaps more importantly, the costs and benefits would not have been spread equitably. The principal gainers would have been officers in the SPLM/A and people close to them; the main losers, cultivators and people displaced from their home areas.

The SPLM/A offensive was probably a stimulus for increased raiding which was carried out by GOS-backed militias into Bahr al-Ghazal in 1997 (Deng 1999 pp. 41-43). Raids by the *murahaleen* PDF were recorded by OLS in February, March, April, July, September and October; by Nuer militia in May; and by Kerubino militia in January, June, July, September and October (HCU 1998d p. 4. See also Appendix 1 of the present thesis). At the same time, insecurity in the GOS-patrolled enclave around Wau was said to have 'prevented large-scale planting in 1997' (ibid.).

The 1996 harvest had been poor (FEAU 1996a). The 1997 crops in Bahr al-Ghazal were even worse, succumbing to the unusual weather conditions described above (FAO and WFP 1997). Signs were seen of worsening hunger; Médecins Sans Frontières noticed 'unusually high malnutrition rates' in Bahr al-Ghazal in 1997, with 'more than 40% of all under 5 year olds…malnourished in some areas' (MSF 1999a). The adverse weather and intensified fighting meant that the scene was set for dearth in the hunger gap period before the 1998 crop was gathered in (FAO 1998b Section 3.4.1).

The fact that the circumstances became a major crisis may be attributed largely to SPLA surprise attacks in late January on Abyei, Aweil, Gogrial and (most importantly) Wau. After his role in creating famine conditions through recurrent raiding, Kerubino was the prominent figure in these events too. On 30th December he reported from his field base at the camp of Marial Bai (on the northern edge of the GOS-controlled enclave around Wau) to the authorities in the town, that he had negotiated the surrender of several

hundred SPLA soldiers together with their officers and their weapons (BBC 1998a). Many of these were then escorted by regular troops towards the town. Khartoum agreed to send food and medicines for them, and for others, including civilians, who were also thought to be defecting (IRIN 1998a). On 28th January, Kerubino and his force, together with the SPLA fighters and some longer-standing inhabitants of Wau, apparently attempted to capture the town in a Trojan Horse operation on behalf of the rebels. The attempt failed; Government forces counter-attacked and renewed their grip on the towns. In the following days they (or perhaps more especially Fertit and *mujahideen* irregulars) killed or otherwise punished many Dinka people in the Wau area thought to be sympathetic to the SPLM/A (HCU 1998d; Rone 1999 pp. 71-75). Streams of people – perhaps in the order of 100,000 individuals – fled out of Wau and the other towns.

The displaced were not able to carry much with them (SRRA DMO 1998 p. 6) and their requirements must have had a heavy impact on the population of the surrounding countryside. This population was already facing exceptionally hard conditions, due to the effects of fighting and poor weather on the previous year's harvest. Now many households were asked additionally to support relatives from Wau; the rural communities were having to host groups of displaced people. The host population was said initially to have responded generously but at grave cost to its own reserves (SRRA DMO 1998 pp. 7-8; Task Force 1998 p. 35). A senior local government figure among the displaced from Wau later recounted: 'When your relatives come, you give. This finished the food they had' (Interview 2005d). The displaced population hastened the depletion of publicly-accessible reserve food resources such as fish and edible wild foods (SRRA DMO 1998 p. 6). By March, in some parts of Bahr al-Ghazal, people were resorting to an unusual and time-consuming collection of foodstuffs like ants and wild rice (ETC 1999; Beaumont 1998c). There was also a large impact on food market prices. The cash price of sorghum in the major rural market centres was reported as rising by 50 per cent in the first three months of 1998 alone (SRRA DMO 1998 p. 6), and more than fourfold in the crisis epicentre, Wau County (Deng 1999 Figure 11). An indication of the desperation of many is given by the fact that the speed of selling cattle – reserve assets for Dinka pastoralists – was at high levels even though prices were falling precipitously (SRRA DMO 1998 pp. 5-6; Deng 1999 pp. 46-57). Inter-regional trade was insufficiently free and developed to equalize market prices between Bahr al-

Ghazal and its neighbouring areas, due to military instability, heavy and erratic taxation within SPLM/A areas, and a lack of transport infrastructure (Deng 1999 pp. 50-51).

2.4 THE DELIVERY AND ROLE OF RELIEF

2.4.1 Relief during flight restrictions and supply shortages

The displaced and their hosts gained little direct benefit from humanitarian relief until the middle of the year. Table 1, below, gives a rough indication of relevant food relief deliveries in the early part of the famine response.

Table 1: WFP's monthly cereal relief deliveries to Bahr al-Ghazal, January-July 1998

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul
Quantity (tonnes)*	140	490	1,200	990	2,800	3,400	4,700
Rough proportion of calorific requirement for 701,000 people**	1%	5%	11%	9%	27%	32%	45%

Notes for table

*. The quantities in this row of the table are taken from Task Force (1998 p. 11). No definitive and consistent figures for WFP's monthly food deliveries to Bahr al-Ghazal were found in the course of the present study. The Task Force team was working in partnership with WFP at the time of their report, and in a good position to compile data from logistical management information. The figures are roughly – but not precisely – compatible with data presented by Deng (1999 p. 72 Figure 21) and information unsystematically presented by WFP through public situation reports and press releases.

**. The percentages in this row rely on the assumption that each person needed 15kg per month (about 500g per day).

The figure of 701,000 people used in the table is the number of people that WFP announced it was targeting in Bahr al-Ghazal in June (WFP 1998f). It is a somewhat arbitrary choice of benchmark, used only to provide a first rough indication of the significance of the delivered quantities. The estimated numbers of needy and targeted people changed over time, and were questionable in many ways, as discussed especially in Sections 2.6.2 and 5.2. Nevertheless use of this benchmark helps make the point that the supplied relief was probably of very marginal assistance, at best, until the end of April, and still inadequate for some months after that. (It is important to realize that although the tonnage figures mostly keep increasing, they represent rates of delivery,

not cumulative amounts delivered. In January the rate was minimal because OLS had an acute shortage of funds and supplies.)

Only a handful of relief flights could take place to the rural areas around Wau before GOS imposed a ban on all such flights (UN 1998c). Under OLS security rules, agency field staff were evacuated. WFP was not holding substantial stockpiles of relief food in the field. A quantity of 100 or 120 tonnes of WFP food reached Mapel, about 70 kilometres southeast of Wau, on 22nd February by road from Uganda (DFID 1998c; WFP 1998k). It could not progress further towards Wau because of the poor state of the roads and the security conditions. A further 240 tonnes from the convoy was reported as reaching Bahr al-Ghazal within the following week (WFP 1998k).

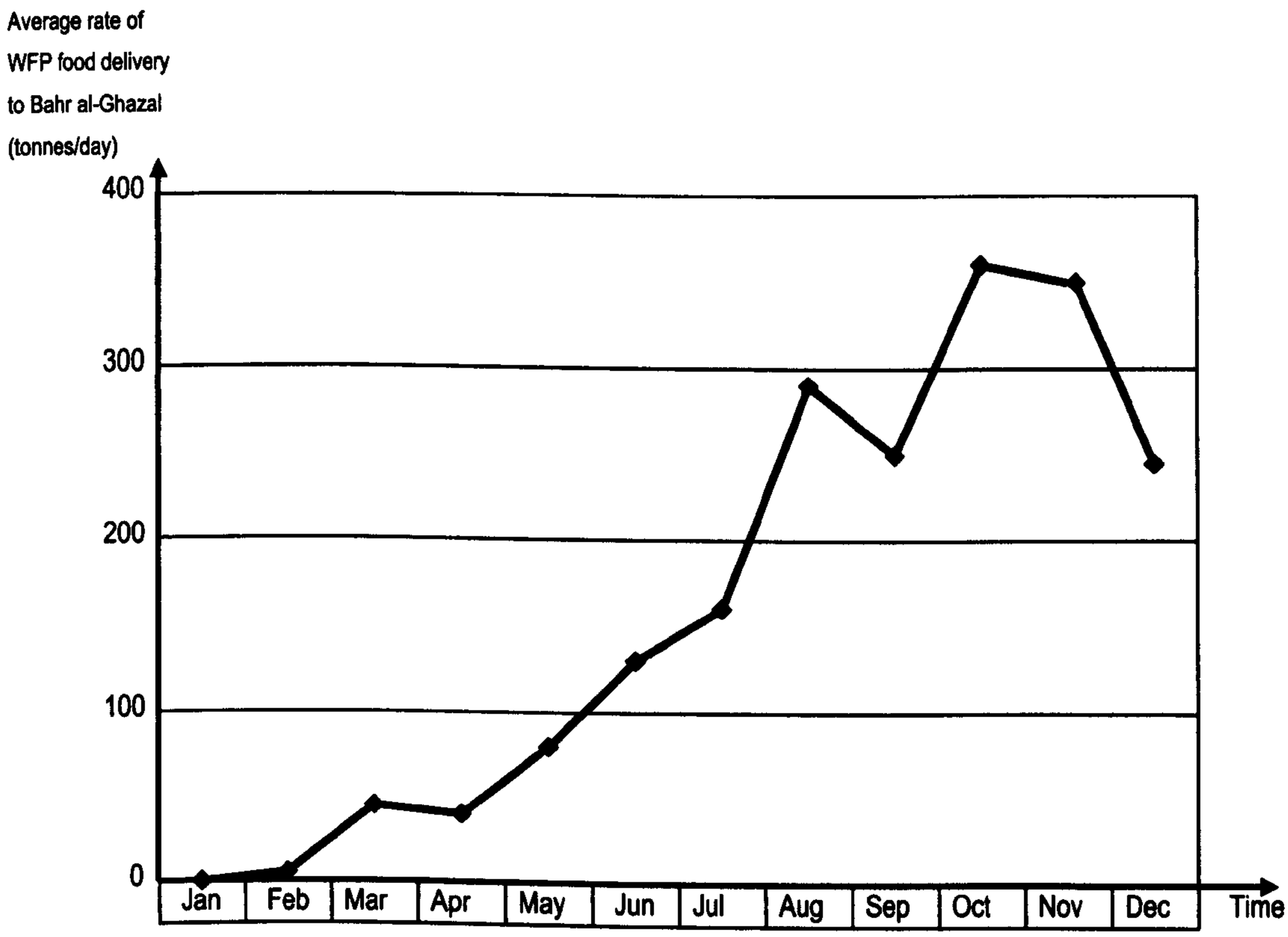
Aid flights resumed on 26th February, but only to four locations in the rebel-held areas of Bahr al-Ghazal – Akuem, Pakor, Adet and Ajiep – beside the GOS-held towns of Wau and Aweil (AFP 1998a). As it turned out, deliveries to Akuem were severely impeded, as it was seen to be too insecure for OLS staff to stay there overnight (WFP 1998m). The permitted destinations were supplemented by Rumbek and Akak in mid-March (USAID 1998a; OLS 1998e). Of the 1,200 tonnes of food reported delivered in March, only about half went to the air-delivery locations in northern Bahr al-Ghazal; the other half arrived further away from Wau, in Lakes region (WFP 1998q).

For April, air access was granted to almost all of the places that OLS requested throughout the region, but the numbers of flights remained small. It appears that during the period of flight restrictions, NPA succeeded in delivering some hundreds of tonnes of food by air to northern Bahr al-Ghazal in defiance of GOS sovereignty (Interview 2005g). 500 tonnes of USAID-donated food was unobtrusively handed over to it from WFP's stock when the latter's air delivery options were constricted, with the donor's encouragement (Interview 2005f; 2005g). It is unclear whether this quantity is included in the WFP delivery data cited in this chapter.

The few distribution sites that could operate in Northern Bahr al-Ghazal from late February to the end of March quickly became what was often called 'relief magnets'. A better expression is hard to find, although it does not quite capture the positive feedback effect involved: relief deliveries attracted people to a particular place; the resulting

concentration of weak people impelled the delivery of larger quantities of relief there; and the cycle began again (Howe 2010 pp. 41-44). It was an effect that WFP staff tried to resist. They were conscious that relief-seeking exacted a high price in time and energy from people who were usually already very poor and weak and would sometimes have to walk for several days (Fielding and others 2000 p. 26; Interview 2005c). It also resulted in aggregations that put great localised stress on publicly-available resources in the distribution area – including water, firewood, fish and edible wild vegetation – and resulted in increased dangers of spreading disease, causing communal conflicts, and creating aid-dependent groups (Interview 2005c). WFP followed an 'objective of avoiding large concentrations of people around limited distribution sites' (WFP 1998m) not only for these reasons, but also 'to prevent resettlement and dependency' (ibid.). But its attempts to decentralize distributions from the places where the food had been air-dropped suffered from the lack of enough ground transportation (ibid.). WFP also tried to hold back from distributing the little food that was being delivered to the field, in favour of stockpiling it instead (McKinley 1998; WFP 1998m; OLS 1998e). However, stockpiling also had disadvantages. It seems likely (though not explicitly stated in WFP publicity) that food stockpiled in Ajiep in March was looted in militia raiding that took place at the end of that month (UNICEF/OLS 1998b; Task Force 1998 p. 41). Meanwhile, aid-migrants were often made to wait for many days in the sight of piles of food before a distribution would take place (McKinley 1998; IRIN 1998c). In spite of this, given the very limited amounts of food initially available, rations were relatively small, making it uneconomic for people who had migrated from another rural area to take them home, rather than continue to camp, waiting for the next distribution (Harragin and Chol 1999 p. 60).

Diagram 1: WFP rates of delivering food in Bahr al-Ghazal in 1998



Notes for diagram

1. The area of the chart under the line approximatelyrepresents the quantity of WFP food delivered to Bahr al-Ghazal (including Lakes). The daily rate of food delivery is based on a monthly average.
2. The data for this graph is taken from Deng (1999 fig. 21, p. 72). They are approximately though not exactly compatible with those used in Table 1 above. Like the Task Force, Deng was in a good position to compile data from logistical management information.

2.4.2 The problem of need-based distribution

When a distribution did happen, displaced people were often unable to obtain an adequate share, or any share at all. In the early stages of the crisis, aid agencies seemingly did not realize this. But the rate of relief delivery to the field increased rapidly from May, as illustrated in Diagram 1 above. The acceleration was sustained,

but even by July many of the most vulnerable people were still evidently receiving little or no relief food. OLS, the SRRA and the political authorities of the SPLM then agreed to commission a joint Task Force to investigate the problem (Task Force 1998). The Task Force reported that the relief distributions attended by international aid staff, in which they gained the impression that the most desperate people were being targeted, were normally followed by 're-distributions' after these officials had left the scene (Task Force 1998 pp. 4-8, 12-17). Re-distributions, supervised by the chief or chiefs of the territory in which the distribution took place, would firstly see the setting aside of a tax (known as 'tayeen') to be taken by the SPLM/A particularly for the maintenance of its soldiers who were widely held to be 'an integral part of the community' (p. 4).

The amount of tax was probably often as much as half of the total quantity of relief supplied. The Catholic Church's Apostolic Administrator for Rumbek Diocese said in July 1998 that in his area the SPLA was stealing at least 65 per cent of relief (Malwal 1998; Hoile 2002 p. 77). An SPLM investigation in Ajiep in October and November 1998 found that '[t]he 50% food contributed to the SPLM/A (army, civil adm. and SRRA) has reduced the quantity of food intended for the most vulnerable civil population' (SPLM 1998). An evaluation of Danish aid suggested that this was not unique to Ajiep. '[I]n several of the most severe areas of Bahr El Ghazal taxation is rumoured to have accounted for approximately 50% of the general ration'(Buchanan-Smith and others 1999 Note 56 Section 13.2). These rates were probably higher than those that applied in less desperate times, as widespread shortages would have made the taxing of non-aid resources more difficult, and inflated market prices would have made profiteering more attractive.

When the tax takings had been set aside, each chief would divide the relief to his constituency. After subdivision through the different layers of the traditional authority system, representatives of the constituent households might each receive a similar quantity, or a quantity in proportion to the number of their dependents. The Task Force also observed that chiefs, sub-chiefs and clan leaders might exercise favouritism towards their own families and friends. People who were not part of the constituency of a chief in the system were relatively unlikely to receive relief. Migrants from outside the area thus tended to be excluded, and this could be the case even if they had been born

there and had relatives there, insofar as they had not been paying taxes locally due to residence somewhere else such as Wau town (Jaspars 1999).

Even where it was arranged that there should be relief set aside for the displaced, they could have difficulty claiming it. The displaced tended to be categorized according to the SPLM/A administrative county in which they originated. As this was not a system based on kinship groups, the representatives often did not know – or consider themselves beholden to – all the people in the group (Jaspars 1999 p. 10). The failure to ensure that relief specifically reached the displaced people was crucial. They became malnourished more than members of the resident populations around relief centres (Duffield, Young and others 1999 pp. 56-58) and they were far more likely to die.[9]

The Task Force also found that widows were often excluded from re-distributions (Task Force 1998 p. 16). It is unclear within the report whether this was taken to include female-headed households in general. The following year, a WFP document suggested that the proportion of women with children who had no husband present might be as high as 60 per cent in parts of northern Bahr al-Ghazal, and that they were 'less likely to receive [relief] food than the others' (WFP 1999b p. 2). Differentiated mortality figures do not seem to have been collected for this group, but it was often observed that most of the people dying in the relief centres were women and children (DFID 1998b).

In places where an aid agency was running a therapeutic feeding centre for young children, the family of that child was sometimes excluded from general relief distributions. As a result, feeding centre workers suspected that food given for a malnourished child was being used by the whole family (Beaumont 1998b). A further problem, affecting distributed relief and other assets too, was widespread incidence of armed robbery. The Task Force (p.8) particularly noted the role of groups of youths who had been assigned and armed as protectors of cattle herds (against raiding by Nuer

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[9] Crude mortality rates (CMR) were measured in July at 26/10,000/day for the displaced in Ajiep as against 1.5/10,000/day for the resident population in the surrounding districts (MSF survey quoted in Deng 1999 p. 16). In Panthou in August, the CMR was recorded at 21/10,000/day for the displaced and 1.5/10,000/day for the residents (Creusvaux, 1998 #1670 cited in Jaspars 1999 p. 10). In Mapel in August, the figures were 23/10,000/day for the displaced and 11/10,000/day for the residents (MSF-Belgium, 1998 #2025 cited in Jaspars 1999 p. 10).

and other militia) on behalf of their families and clans. Living a mobile life separate from their home communities, these young men in some cases saw that they were not getting their proper shares of relief, and decided to redress the situation by force. However, it is likely that some of the looting was committed by other parties such as ill-disciplined SPLA soldiers. Looting was meanwhile also continuing in militia raids from time to time (WFP 1998h).

2.4.3 Feeding centres and the nightmare of Ajiep

As has often been the case in food relief, grain was so predominant that the aid did not provide a good balance of nutrients (Task Force 1998 p. 12; Jaspars 1999). Not only that: much of the grain was un-milled wheat, extremely hard to be made edible by weakened people who lacked equipment and facilities (Interview 2008). In any case, dry-ration food was not the only type of relief that would have been relevant to the famine-afflicted. The more acutely malnourished needed appropriately-intensive feeding. The displaced, in particular, would have urgently required help in the form of shelter and bed-mats[10], cooking and other utensils, water containers, and access to clean water. Many would have required medical attention and medication. The precise extent to which they found these things is hard to assess; many different agencies were involved supplying the many types of assistance implied, and, if no accurate overall picture of requirements and deliveries was compiled for the dry-food relief, the picture is even less clear in most of the other sectors. But it may be assumed that on the whole they too were subject to lateness and problems of distribution.

At the peak of the aid operation, 45 emergency supplementary and therapeutic feeding centres were running in Bahr al-Ghazal, serving about 35,000 children (Murphy and Salama 1999; Duffield and others 1999 p. 95). However, many of the individual NGO projects, together with the overall co-ordination and supervision by UNICEF, came in for criticism afterwards (Murphy and Salama 1999; Macaskill 2000). Often the centres were set up in a rush, using hastily-recruited staff who were sometimes inexperienced, ill-qualified or unfamiliar with local conditions. Many were inadequately backed by

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10 When an MSF emergency-contract physician arrived in Ajiep he found 'thousands of people huddled on the ground in groups', a state conducive to the spread of disease. Gradually, over the months, huts were built for them (MSF Australia 2004).

general relief distributions. The NGOs that ran them faced – particularly at relief magnets – a large number of malnourished people and at the same time a shortage of trained staff, clean water and supplies. They were sometimes impelled to impose biometric eligibility criteria that were more stringent than those in widely-accepted international standards, meaning that a person could be quite badly malnourished and yet not qualify for feeding. An evaluation study for MSF Holland concluded that, given the shortage of resources and other constraints, not only was this stringency justified but that an even more ruthless policy of triage would have been more effective in saving lives (Collins 1999; cited in Griekspoor and Collins 2001).

In Ajiep, MSF Belgium came in for particularly sharp criticism on grounds of inadequate capacity, and for resisting the idea that one or more additional NGOs should be brought in (OLS 1999c p. 4), although it did in June ask its sister agency, MSF-Holland, to assist (Duffield and others 1999 p. 96). MSF in turn blamed WFP for not getting enough food to the neediest people (MSF 1999b). Ajiep was a notoriously hard case. As one of the few sites cleared for relief from late February it attracted relief-seekers from far and wide: substantial population groups from the payams of Kuajok, Panthou, Alek, Wau, Udici, Kuajena, and smaller numbers from the counties of Twic, Abyei and Rumbek. It became a relief magnet (Duffield and others 1999 pp. 124-5), despite devastating militia attacks in early April and late May (UNICEF/OLS 1998b; Task Force 1998 pp. 41-42). [11] The influx was disastrous, overwhelming local infrastructure including water and health facilities (Task Force 1998 pp. 41-42). The concentration of population, given a lack of sanitation facilities, resulted in spread of diseases, particularly dysentery (Buchanan-Smith and others 1999 Section 14.2; Duffield and others 1999 p. 124). A village with a normal population of 1,500 swelled to more than ten times that number by July (MSF 1999b pp. 6-7). Besides the meagreness of relief supplies from February to April, the area suffered from insecurity, which disrupted relief activity and further depleted local resources in March, April and May (Task Force 1998 p. 41; UNICEF/OLS 1998b). Consequently, in May, many people were still dependent on tree leaves and wild grains (MSF 1999b p. 6). According to MSF (p.7), until the end of July when thousands of people were congregated in

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[11] In the latter raid it was reported that 300 people were killed and 7,000 cattle stolen (Task Force 1998 pp. 41-42).

Ajiep, relief food deliveries were still only enough to meet about 10 per cent of the needs. This figure appears to have been based on MSF surveys of what people had received; WFP contended that in July it was supplying 50 per cent of total food requirements (WFP/OLS 1999 p. 2). The discrepancy may be partly due to the gross inequalities of distribution, mentioned above.

The tension between the agencies was reflected in conflicting strategies; while MSF expanded the capacity of its central feeding and health complex, WFP was trying to decentralize its distributions in order to avoid population concentrations (Task Force 1998 p. 43). In July, MSF assessed 80 per cent of under-5 children as malnourished, 50 per cent of them (2,400 children) 'at risk of dying of severe malnutrition'. Mortality rates rose nightmarishly in that month, to the point that on some days more than a hundred people died among the 17,500 people estimated to be gathered there.[12] At the end of the month, WFP drastically increased its nominal target population in the area (including the nearby village of Adet) from 30,000 to 60,000, but many or most of the displaced were still prevented from receiving full relief rations until the Task Force visited in mid-August (Task Force 1998 p. 42). At that point, the mortality rates measured by MSF fell precipitously; in September they fluctuated between 2 and 4/10,000/day: a level still worse than the international emergency standard but, for southern Sudan, almost normal.

The fast-deteriorating state of people's nutrition in relief magnet centres in mid-year led UNICEF to press for the setting-up of many more NGO supplementary and therapeutic feeding programmes in Bahr al-Ghazal. This appeared as a logical response within UNICEF's core set of expertise, but was later criticised (Duffield and others 1999 pp. 96-97) on the grounds that such programmes, intensely reliant on expatriate and other staff and the goods needed to support them, imposed a heavy extra burden on air transport capacity at a time when this was a critical constraint. It may have further unbalanced the already top-heavy relation between feeding programmes and general

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[12] UNICEF's *Donor Report 1998-1999*, as cited in Marriage (2006a p. 121), stated that the overall mortality rate in Ajiep rose from 18/10,000/day to nearly 70/10,000/day in a ten-day period in the first half of the month. Another survey at the end of the month showed a rate of 26/10,000/day (MSF 1999b p. 7), possibly for the month taken as a whole.

food distribution. However, MSF-Holland, for one, was careful to avoid this by arranging its own air transport rather than relying on the general OLS facility. Perhaps more serious was the tendency to promote a geographical spread of feeding centres (some of which ended up with comparatively unimportant work to do) at the expense of intensive support in the crisis hotspots. Transport capacity appears to have been the overriding constraint. MSF Belgium complained both at the inadequacy of the general food distribution (ibid. p. 98) and that the priority given to food transportation had prevented them bringing enough equipment to maintain adequate water and sanitation facilities (ibid. p. 97).

2.4.4 Political problems in Twic and Wau

Twic County suffered more than most places from a lack of funded aid agency activity, following the SPLM/A's expulsion of a French NGO, Agence Contre la Faim (ACF), in September 1997 (OLS 1997b; Macaskill 2000 pp. 187-188). The SPLM/A's official reason for the expulsion was that agency staff divulged militarily sensitive information on their communications radios. Some suspected, however, that the SPLM/A's motive was to stop ACF and other agencies investigating possible diversion of food at a camp for displaced people elsewhere in the rebel-held areas (ECHO 1998; Autesserre 2002 Note 58). Either way, the expulsion resulted not only in the loss of that agency's services, but a refusal on the part of major donors to fund alternatives (USAID 1998a). This may have been supported by the fact that WFP considered Twic County was more food secure than some other areas of Bahr al-Ghazal, such as Gogrial County: 'They had better access to trade, better variety of wild foods, had better crop production in 1997. They were more prepared for insecurity and when affected, they had more options to cover the losses' (WFP 1999b). Nevertheless, when the famine response became an acute imperative, ways were found of partially relaxing the aid embargo. For instance, by August 1998, DFID was financially supporting supplementary feeding at two centres in Twic County run by a local NGO through a grant administered by Christian Aid (Collison 1998).

The lack of enough effective relief for displaced people in the rural areas eventually resulted in the return of many of them to Wau in the middle of the year, on the

resumption of relief operations there.[13] When the fighting began in Wau, most relief agency work in the town had ceased. Senior staff had been evacuated and the stocks and compounds of many agencies had been looted. Atrocities were committed against civilians by forces associated with GOS (NSCC 1998b; HCU 1998d; Rone 1999). An inter-agency OLS assessment team, allowed in on 23rd and 24th February, estimated that 65 per cent of the town's population had fled (WFP 1998k). The team found that some of the people who remained were in acute need of assistance, but the number of these was small. In view of a perceived lack of security, UN staff did not become based in Wau again until April (HCU 1998d). In May, amid the general increase in aid air-delivery capacity, the services of first one then two C-130 cargo planes were devoted primarily to relief in Wau. A flow of displaced people returning to Wau, which began as a trickle in late February, and averaged 10 per day at the end of March, accelerated sharply when the relief started arriving, reaching 100 per day at the end of May, and jumping to 1,500-2,000 per day by mid June and 2,500 per day in the first half of July. This brought up a total of 50,000 returnees and other in-migrants by mid-July. These people had virtually no clothing or possessions when they arrived, and most of the youngest and eldest members of families were said to have died on the way (Arop 1998). Official relief was meagre in quantity until May. The most effective relief agency until this time was the Catholic Church (HCU 1998d p. 3).

Even when aid did start reaching Wau in substantial quantities, from May until at least mid-June many of the needy people did not receive an adequate share. Distribution at this time was chaotic. It suffered from political interference and manipulation. The formation in June of an Emergency Working Group for regular liaison between the local authorities, NGOs and UN improved the situation somewhat. Aid agencies and their staff, whose entry had been highly restricted until August, were suddenly allowed more access in that month as a result of UN diplomatic pressure on GOS. One result was a new problem of co-ordination. Conflict between agencies and the government continued over the latter's decision to resettle returnees at the limits of the secured enclave, mainly in three 'peace camps' of Dierakok (Hillat Jadid) to the north, Mayam Luac (Hilat Nazareth) to the south, and Jebel Kheir to the west (Arop 1998). In effect, this made

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[13] This paragraph on relief in Wau is based mainly on information in HCU (1998d; 1998a) and HCU as cited in ETC (1999 pp. 77-78).

them part of a security buffer zone, and kept them in limbo as regards their citizenship status (HCU 1998d). In August, UNICEF estimated 72 per cent of the displaced population as malnourished: 41 per cent severely (Duffield, Young and others 1999 p. 58). A population of more than 50,000 is thought to have been suffering a mortality rate above 15 per 10,000 per day (Buchanan-Smith and others 1999 Section 14.2). Deng (Deng p. 21) states that overall about five thousand people died in Wau during the famine. He attributes this mainly to lack of access to safe drinking water while GOS security measures prevented the gathering of firewood from the peripheries of the town.

2.4.5 The rise and fall of the acute phase

An absence of much effective relief from February to May resulted in a magnification of the crisis. The shortage of food seems to have caused many people to stop sharing with relatives and neighbours at an early stage (Task Force 1998 p. 6; Fielding and others 2000 p. 24). Relations of reciprocity would have helped a great deal under less severe circumstances, by filling the gaps left in the formal relief distributions (Harragin and Chol 1999). The shortages at this time were also adverse for agriculture. The main period for planting crops in Bahr al-Ghazal is May, when the rains usually arrive (FEAU 1996b). Although the rains came on time in 1998, and aid agencies made an effort to provide tools and seeds in readiness for them (HCU 1998c p. 2), people's ability to cultivate was diminished by their poor physical condition, and their readiness to do so was reduced by the need to find short-term sources of food and other necessaries. Many people had lost their seed stocks. Fewer cattle than usual were brought back to villages from the dry-season grazing areas (FEAU 1998), perhaps because many had been sold or because the owners wanted to keep them safe. By May aid agencies were acknowledging that they had failed to provide relief in time to enable a normal harvest in 1998 (Task Force 1998 p. 9).

The rate of relief delivery did not peak until October, by which time the food airdrop had become the largest in WFP's history (UN 1998a) peaking at about 30 flights per day (USCR 1999). By this time the crisis in the field was already abating. In some places, relief food was becoming hardly worth the trouble of distributing (Macaskill 2000). UNICEF reported that global malnutrition rates in Bahr al-Ghazal fell from more than 50 per cent in May-June to less than 30 per cent in September-October (OLS

1998f). In December, an FAO report judged that the crisis was 'contained' though 'far from over' (FAO 1998b Section 3.4.1). Although, in the worst-affected parts of Bahr al-Ghazal the 1998 harvest was as meagre as the 1997 one (FAO 1998b Annex), the relief operation began the new year with great momentum. This, combined with the fact that the 1998 harvest was good in other parts of Sudan, ensured that grain prices were low. Several nutrition intervention agencies began to scale down their emergency operations in January 1999, though pockets of acute malnutrition and food insecurity remained. (WFP 1999a; Duffield, Young and others 1999). Malnutrition rates continued to fall, reaching below 15 per cent by March (Bellamy and others 1999) a level widely regarded as indicating a humanitarian emergency (Young and Jaspars 2009 p. 16).

2.5 How many died? And who?

There is no precise and reliable figure of the number of people who died due to the famine. Estimates as low as 30,000, and as high as 100,000 have been reported (USCR 1999). The most explicitly-reasoned estimations have been those presented by Luka Biong Deng (1999 pp. 15-18; Deng 2002a). These give alternative results of 70,000 or 78,000 deaths above a benchmark of normality. The difference between the two figures relates to the choice of baseline mortality rate. The first figure depends on mortality data deduced from a census taken before the war; the second figure represents an estimated deviation from a death rate of 1/10,000 per day, a level taken as the threshold for a humanitarian emergency (SMART 2006 p. 48; Young and Jaspars 2009 p. 16). The fact that the former figure represented a higher normal mortality rate than the latter serves as a reminder that conditions treated as normal for the locality were already worse than those internationally regarded as signifying disaster. Both results depended on just three datasets: a survey of 943 households of displaced people at Ajiep in January 1999; local authority records pertaining to non-displaced population in the same area (Kuajok); and some interviewing of community leaders by Deng which broadly confirmed the latter. The mortality rates derived from these places (all within Gogrial County), were then applied to recorded figures of displaced and non-displaced populations in an area comprising parts of the counties of Gogrial, Aweil East, Wau, Tonj and Rumbek. Why these particular places, and not others, were taken as comprising the famine area in this calculation is unclear. Famine effects had been felt more widely (see Table 8 on Page 208 and Map 2 on Page xii). Deng seems not to have included GOS-held areas in the

calculation; the most notable omission is Wau town. On the other hand, the peak mortality rate for displaced people recorded at Ajiep was almost incredibly high when compared with other recorded emergencies worldwide (Buchanan-Smith and others 1999 Section 14.2). Ajiep was a notorious blackspot during the emergency, and its death rates are unlikely to have been experienced in many other places.

As observed in Section 2.4.3, data from locations where relief was being distributed suggest that malnutrition and death rates were much higher among the groups of displaced people than in the long-term resident population. There is little reason to think that Amartya Sen's classic observation of famine deaths being usually a matter of entitlement failure rather than absolute unavailability of food (Sen 1981) did not apply here. It seems likely that a large proportion of the acutely vulnerable displaced people were the ones who had fled from fighting in the January 1998. When calculating the overall death toll, Deng (1999 p. 17) uses an estimate for the displaced population of a little over 140,000, which seems to correspond roughly with his estimate of 160,000 for the number of people who fled Wau town in January (and does not include those fleeing other GOS towns and militia attacks at that time). But we have seen that many of those who fled the GOS towns returned during the year. So it is also likely that substantial numbers of the displaced were people from rural areas who were impelled by general famine conditions to leave their homes in search of relief. Many of these would have been among the poorest and most socially-isolated in their respective communities.

What is less clear is the prevalence of suffering and death away from the villages where relief was distributed. The relief locations were the places where the (very few) datasets on mortality were collected. Difficulties of transportation and security meant it could hardly be otherwise. Even near the height of the crisis, some of the international agencies evidently suspected that the relief magnets were exceptions to a rule of comparative normality. WFP on 26th June reported: 'Famine zones are emerging in about 25 pockets of the Bahr El Ghazal region' (WFP 1998g). Such expressions seemed to imply that such a collection of zones hardly amounted to a proper famine. Whether the prime victims were predominantly the Wau displaced, or also to a great extent composed of the weakest members of society from a wide swathe of Bahr al-Ghazal now detached from their home communities, the foregoing sections have presented reasons to think they were all part of a densely-interconnected phenomenon. But, given

the paucity of quantitative evidence and the lack of a precise conceptual boundary around the famine, it does not seem possible to state its magnitude more accurately than by saying that tens of thousands of people died.

2.6 POSSIBILITIES OF PREVENTION AND PREPAREDNESS

Having shown above how relief was late and in other ways inadequate, the thesis will in subsequent chapters examine the reasons for the lateness and inadequacy. Before doing so however, it is important to consider what would have been involved for the humanitarians were they to have been better prepared for the crisis that followed the Wau attack. The first part of this section looks briefly at the possible development of surge capacities in the form of stockpiles, fluid international capacities and standing local capacities. A central sub-section addresses the problem of the relief distribution systems, so clearly found to be unsatisfactory in the crisis, asking whether their shortcomings could have been avoided. Lastly it is asked whether a more systematic approach to contingency planning would have made a difference.

2.6.1 Surge capacities

Perhaps the most obvious form of disaster preparedness is the stockpiling of emergency supplies. But it would have been very difficult, and probably undesirable, to stockpile food or other relief supplies in Bahr al-Ghazal in the mid-1990s against the possibility of a sudden crisis. As described above, almost any tangible asset was a likely target for theft or destruction. Even if stockpiles survived intact, there would have been a danger, given the shortage of local transportation capacity, that they would have created their own relief magnet effects.

Stockpiling at a distance – say in Lokichoggio or El Obeid – might have been more secure, though still far from absolutely safe. For food stocks to be kept at forward bases in good condition there would probably have had to be a buffer arrangement, in which older supplies were continuously being released and replenished with newer ones. In one respect the association of such a stock with an ongoing relief operation should be convenient, as there is then a natural outlet for the older supplies. But when the operation suffers from chronic underfunding and under-delivery, as OLS did at the end

of 1997 (see Sections 3.3.1 and 5.3 below), it is hard to justify maintaining a substantial buffer – whether of food or of less-perishable goods – against the risk of a more acute crisis. The resources are arguably better used by the field agencies as soon as they become available. A robust on-going relief operation may be justifiable in a volatile situation, not only by the needs that it immediately serves, but also as a basic form of preparedness against special calamity.

An alternative approach to the maintenance of surge capacity involves identifying or creating potentially-useful resources which can be pressed into service at a crucial moment. Meanwhile they may be economically productive in another sphere. The obvious example is appropriately-trained staff. As described in the last section, the rapid availability of such staff was certainly a problem in 1998. The present study has not included a detailed study of the ways that the various agencies tried to solve this problem. But it may be noted that this is still seen as a difficult and ill-understood strategy worldwide (Adinolfi and others 2005 Section 2.2). In Sudan, a great part of the difficulty was to help emergency staff understand the local conditions and context: something which would ideally require them to have had previous exposure visits. As with stockpiling, this would hardly seem like a justifiable use of resources if the overall programme was chronically under-funded.

Within the literature of disaster preparedness a strong argument has been made for creating capacity within the potentially-afflicted societies rather than externally (Stoddard 2004). But this is more straightforwardly applicable to situations of vulnerability to natural disaster rather than to complex emergency. In the latter such an approach is likely to run into the difficulty of developmental non-neutrality. While the restrictions on flight access to Bahr al-Ghazal in early 1998 painfully exposed the disadvantages of having extremely poor land transportation infrastructure, any prior efforts to improve the road or rail system would probably have had military implications. [14] As investments they would also have been highly susceptible to nullification by the contingencies of war. Some such efforts were made at various points in the 1990s, but not on the scale and with the consistency that would have been

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[14] The HRW report specifically recommended donors *not* to support rehabilitation of the rail track, because of the way it facilitated human rights abuses (Rone 1999 p. 9).

required for an effective contribution to relief of the famine. In the aftermath of the famine however, using the temporarily-improved availability of resources that had been generated by the fiasco, WFP did launch an infrastructure project for OLS Southern Sector logistics at an estimated cost of eleven million US dollars, but an internal evaluation was later unable to identify any definite favourable impact (FAO 1998b Section 3.4.2; de Hennin and Enqvist 2002 pp. 34-38).

2.6.2 Relief distribution methods and functional ignorance

In many ways, lack of preparedness was seen most strikingly in the embarrassing revelations about food distributions epitomized by the Task Force report (Task Force 1998). It might well be wondered how WFP, having years of experience conducting relief operations in southern Sudan, could have been found in the crisis with such an apparently-dysfunctional distribution system as the one described at the beginning of Section 2.4. The formal structure of the Task Force investigation implied that WFP and other international agencies had previously been unaware of the practices of re-distribution of aid by local powers and that these were being freshly discovered. But this was not explicitly stated in the report, and, on closer examination, the impression conveyed is problematic. One of the task force members has acknowledged that the mission and document must be seen largely as a political exercise (Interview 2005c). What it did was less to uncover facts previously unknown to the participating agencies, than to create a space in which facts already unofficially known could be collectively recognised. The trope of discovery provided cover for an amnesty on possible previous failures to act properly, and offered the chance of a new beginning.

The hard fact to acknowledge was that diversion of aid had been routine. Academically this reality had been aired during the years preceding the famine. Human Rights Watch and African Rights had published accounts and discussions of the problems of distribution and diversion in southern Sudan (HRW 1994 pp. 174-188; African Rights 1995a pp. 6-21; 1997). African Rights described how the SPLM/A had, in its formative years in the 1980s, as the de facto rulers of the refugee camps for Sudanese in Ethiopia under the tutelage of the Mengistu regime, systematically siphoned food aid to military operations and training camps, and sold some of it for the purchase of vehicles and equipment (1997 pp. 70-92). A book by a former SPLA captain published the year

before the famine admitted (in speaking of the years 1983-1991) that a failure of the SPLM/A to develop social and economic relations with the southern Sudanese population had made it dependent on the appropriation of relief. 'Even in cases where the expatriate relief monitors were strict and only distributed relief supplies to the civilians by day, the SPLA would retrieve that food by night' (Nyaba 1997 p. 53). The SPLM/A had learned how to keep the staff of aid agencies and donors in a state where they sometimes suspected what was going on, but were uncertain of the scale of diversion, and unable to prove it. This was done largely by the SPLM/A's control of access to local populations and space, control which could be justified by their taking responsibility for foreigners' safety.

Many of the same features were replicated inside southern Sudan under OLS after 1989. African Rights (1997 pp. 297-299) quotes an internal WFP memorandum showing that WFP field staff and middle-level managers around 1995 were aware that relief food was routinely being 'taxed' by SPLM/A authorities. African Rights (1995a pp. 15-16) also quotes another report which mentions the sighting from an aircraft of stockpiles of food that had been re-amassed after the official distribution. A protest was made at about this time to John Garang, the leader of the SPLM/A, threatening a WFP pullout (p. 19). But the WFP position was not very strong. To pull out would represent a signal failure of the humanitarian project and of the UN system. It might have been hard to get potent political backing from donor governments on this issue, as almost all food aid in southern Sudan came from the US (Brusset 2000 p. 146), and the SPLM/A was part of an alignment of forces in Africa that was favoured by the US and other Western powers (see Section 3.4.3 below). Garang's response to the complaint was to transfer four junior SPLA officers to other duties. The case was thus treated as a deviation from the norm rather than evidence of a general problem. The gesture of punishment was sufficient to allow WFP (and hence effectively OLS as a whole) to continue their work while being able to claim that they were upholding the principles of impartiality and neutrality. It did not, however, address the problem of distribution deeply enough to stop routine diversion happening and prevent it producing a fiasco in a time of crisis.

Describing this event, African Rights (African Rights 1995a pp. 7-8) posits generalized phenomena of 'functional ignorance'[15] and 'functional impotence', pointing out how it may be in the interest of actors in the aid process not to know about – or not to feel able to do anything about – aspects of that process which are contrary to their professed aims and principles. The idea is that their broader interest in a stable and secure continuance of the overall process may be overriding.

It is easy to imagine how, in the bare mechanics of an organization, inconvenient problems can be left off agendas, and inconvenient knowledge can be filed away. But it is less obvious how the human beings who staff an organization personally let go of problems and knowledge, particularly when they are ethically significant. And if the individuals could not let go then it might be difficult for the organization to do so. Stanley Cohen (Cohen 2001) and Zoë Marriage (Marriage 2006b) have contributed to opening up this set of phenomena using the concepts of 'denial' and 'fantasy'. The Freudian connotations of these words seem to anchor the question to the behaviour of individuals, but not exclusively so. They define 'denial' as 'states – in the psychic and political senses – in which something is known and not-known at the same time' (Cohen 2001 p. 79). Cohen explicitly identifies it with Orwellian 'doublethink' (p. 240) the process of which, as Bernard Crick explains in his notes to *Nineteen Eighty-Four* 'has to be conscious, or it would not be carried out with sufficient precision, but it also has to be unconscious, or it would bring with it a feeling of falsity and hence of guilt' (Orwell 1984 p. 342). Evidently we are dealing here with a complex mixture of psychological and non-psychological phenomena, which is hard to understand and describe partly because of sensitivity about attributing moral responsibility.

One can see the simmering of some kinds of denial/doublethink in the internal WFP memorandum quoted by African Rights (1997 pp. 297-299). Although it acknowledges the existence of 'taxes' and WFP's substantial acquiescence in that practice, the writer recounts telling a senior donor official that '[n]o monitor [had] reported families indicating that food had been taken by the military'. Yet the writer also states that 'in the light of the fact that most families in any given area will have members in the military, WFP is not confident that local committees would even want to co-operate in

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[15] The phrase was taken from a draft paper by Mark Duffield later published as Duffield (1996 p. 189)

eliminating such taxes'. The writer additionally argues: 'Of course, it cannot be determined whether or not the military appropriates food from families when monitors are not there to observe'. The 'of course' looks like an appendage of bluster or a cynical wink on a very questionable assertion. It is evident that the writer of the memorandum is aware at one level that taxed relief food is going to the military, yet has a compulsion to produce verbal formulae to convey the impression that this fact is not known, and that little could usefully be done about it if it were. In this instance, such formulae seem to be being prepared primarily for presentation to external parties – the donor official, the NGOs whose tale-telling about WFP's practice is suspected of 'arising out of jealousy', the Northern Sector of OLS, and GOS itself – but it is easy also to envisage that such dicta could partly become internalized within WFP and the minds of many of its staff.

Field monitors were under particular pressure, despite the fact that they were 'encouraged to report and discuss any instances of...diversion' (ibid.) because their effectiveness, security and comfort depended to a great extent on their relationships with local authorities at their duty site (Jaspars 1999). This created an incentive not to investigate things too energetically or even to report suspicions for others to investigate. The present author, when a WFP food monitor in southern Sudan in 1993 was once able privately to look at the message book kept by the SPLA signals officer who was the designated operator of the site WFP communications radio (although the working fiction was that he was a civilian staff member seconded by the SRRA). Feeling guilty, I transcribed a message which detailed the allocation of a batch of 224 sacks of maize, which I had seen divided among community representatives to be distributed to the needy. The message allocated the food 8 per cent to the SRRA, 15 per cent to 'M' (presumably the military), various other sacks to porters and other named beneficiaries, leaving 124 'balance for distribution'. Somehow I never got round to submitting this to my superiors in WFP. I think I was afraid that such information might be interpreted in WFP as an indication of my own incompetence as a monitor, and that my finding such a message and copying it would be regarded as spying by the SPLM/A if they knew of it. I was not confident that I would be protected, or the information used effectively if I passed it on. It might have seemed that further opportunities would arise to develop and use such research. In my own account, then, this episode could be described as one of the food monitor colluding in the functional ignorance of the agency. I may or may not

have mentally blacked out what was going on, but I could justify keeping the important but dangerous information to myself, because doing otherwise seemed to hold little hope of good for anybody.

There is reason to think that comparable self-censorship is also practised at higher levels in aid organizations. The memorandum quoted by African Rights is one piece of evidence that an agency like WFP will often prefer to assure its donors that matters are being managed competently within the existing guidelines, rather than to risk conflicts and time-consuming debates by appealing for help in solving problems. Donor bureaucrats occupy a similar position in relation to their political masters. The temptation is to apply or invent norms, and penalize deviations, rather than open up wider moral and political questions (Marriage 2005). Thus functional ignorance 'sustains the myth of applicable professionalism, and allows the aid supplies to keep coming' (African Rights 1995a p. 7) or becomes 'the means whereby organizational power is made manifest and unaccountable' (Duffield 1996 p. 189). The latter thought is that the sidelining of this kind of inconvenient knowledge is necessary for the self-sustenance of the governing system in which aid is integral. Duffield (ibid.) concludes pessimistically that '*the aid technocracy is structurally incapable of understanding the situations in which it works*' (the emphasis is in the original).

Isn't this too absolute? Couldn't WFP and other relief agencies have been epistemologically better-prepared for their distributions in 1998? Despite the powerful dynamic of ignorance and denial sketched above, it is tempting to imagine room for humanistic manoeuvre. One would hope, for instance, that relatively sophisticated research, such as the *Southern Sudan Vulnerability Study* carried out by Simon Harragin with Chol Changath in 1997-8, could contribute to organizational learning.

Harragin's report, the first edition of which had a publication date of 17th June 1998 – almost at the apex of the famine – highlighted two 'implications for OLS agencies' (Harragin and Chol 1998 p. 51). First – in line with the above discussion – was 'the idea that targeting of the vulnerable directly by aid agencies has a rhetorical rather than practical relevance' (ibid.) in the context of the Dinka areas of rural southern Sudan. In order to reach the most needy, food must be distributed to a local population as a whole. Second was the belief that there was scope for improving the fairness of distributions

through a detailed understanding of the traditional social structure, especially lineages, so as to know which traditional leaders would effectively serve which parts of the population. The problem of getting food to displaced groups, which was so crucial in 1998, was only briefly touched on in this first edition: 'Distributions must...seek to build on the links that displaced people are trying to build with locals...by distributing to both populations' (p.52) as opposed to giving to the displaced only, a practice which, after re-distribution, was counterproductive. Harragin's hope was that if external agencies worked through existing social structures, rather than sidestepping them, communities could take real ownership of aid, and hold their more powerful members to account for theft, because it fell now in the realm of traditional social morality. Also, aid agencies and donors would find it harder to pretend that the amounts of relief they were supplying were adequate.

But application of this message would have been opposing a tide of humanitarian logic. Specific targeting of the vulnerable is both an ideological and a pragmatic desideratum. Ideologically, '[a]id priorities are calculated on the basis of need alone' (Red Cross and NGOs 1994 Clause 1). Pragmatically, as Harragin points out – and as is amplified by Marriage (2005 pp. 367-368; 2006a pp. 141-143) – the logic of targeting is hard to resist when relief supplies are scarce. The advantages of distributing relief through chiefs and sub-chiefs were diminished by the integration of this system with SPLM/A appropriations in bulk (a factor which Harragin did not grapple with in his report). Such active diversion was a greater affront to the principle of humanitarian neutrality than merely providing relief to non-needy people along with the needy. Because the aid agencies could not accept it, they could hardly take account of it within a distribution and monitoring process; and so, in the absence of draconian humanitarian enforcement capabilities, there were strong incentives for the whole process to be opaque. A WFP contribution to the debate on targeted distributions after the 1998 famine recounted:

> We have in the past allowed for chiefs to distribute the food as they wish and in front of us. In many cases there will still be an organised re-distribution. The reasons might include the need to tax the food and maintain a lack of transparency from the people that allows for more food to go to certain groups. (WFP 1999b)

Note the creeping back of denial in the failure here to name the SPLM/A as important among the 'certain groups'. Even though Harragin's Vulnerability Study was funded by WFP's main donor, USAID, WFP continued to insist on trying to ensure particular identification and targeting of the most vulnerable households and individuals (ibid.).

These observations help flesh out Duffield's dictum that '*the aid technocracy is structurally incapable of understanding the situations in which it works*'. The resistance of the system to certain kinds of knowledge need not mean that the people working within it always suffer from incomprehension of their predicament. How the demands of the system operate on – and depend on – the moral psychologies of aid agency staff remains an open question. The writings of WFP officials cited in the last few pages seem to show that – from time to time at least – there were intelligent struggles to reconcile competing models of what was going on. But a strand of practical logic in their situation meant that their ability to acknowledge and respond to the insights of external research was constrained.

How could more aid resources have changed this logic? Mary Anderson, in her influential handbook *Do no harm* presents half a dozen recommended programming options for combating aid theft (Anderson 1999 pp. 39-42). Some of them seem relatively cheap. The option of making civilian populations into protectors of food was implicit in both the WFP attempts to form and cultivate relief committees, and in Harragin's advocacy of using traditional structures. But either way the SPLM/A's control was probably too great for the outsiders to bypass. The option of dispersing relief in a hurry was tried by WFP in the mid-1990s as a response to the targeting of distribution sites by militia forces for raiding (Interview 2005c); but whether or not it was successful in resisting this, it probably did nothing to reduce SPLM/A diversion. The options of using secrecy and identifying thieves, or intensifying monitoring by outsiders, on the other hand, would have required willingness to face a more antagonistic relationship with the SPLM/A, imperilling cooperation on staff security. It would have required much heavier investment in independent distribution management structures and security arrangements. Even then the prospects of success would have been doubtful, as the SPLM/A had plenty of scope for counter-measures. The final idea suggested by Anderson – supplying enough aid to glut the market – is also expensive. There can be little doubt that it would have been a good option for field agencies to call

on, had it been available in the first half of 1998. But in the previous years, such ideas faced heavy opposition from rich-world actors and commentators on grounds of non-neutrality and economy: arguments that it fed soldiers and non-needy people, distorting markets, and fostering idleness and dependence in the population (Bradbury 1998; Duffield and others 1999). Certainly there would have been ethical and tactical problems, but the availability of greater quantities of relief supplies to agencies would probably have given them better scope to reach realistic understandings with local authorities on relief distribution.

2.6.3 Contingency planning

After visiting the crisis scene in May 1998, the British Ambassador to Sudan reported that there had been 'inadequate planning, reflecting an assumption that donor fatigue would persist' (DFID 1998b). A later report for the Danish government's aid department found that 'the lack of a contingency plan to respond to the flight ban was a major failing of the response' (Buchanan-Smith and others 1999 Section 14.3). OLS insisted that it had not failed to plan for contingencies, but had been left 'without the resources necessary to mount the required interventions' (OLS 1998e p. 2).

> OLS took immediate steps after the Annual Assessment to increase the effectiveness of its emergency response. A thorough revision of contingency plans was conducted in Nairobi and Lokichokio and a new emergency preparedness project was designed for inclusion in the 1998 Consolidated Inter-agency Appeal. (OLS 1998e p. 1)

It is true that OLS had in November 1997 declared its participation in an emergency preparedness assessment together with the SRRA, but this was focussed on the scenario of a major SPLA attack on Juba only, and was largely reactive: it followed reports of that 'several thousands' of people had already fled the town due to insecurity and food shortages (OLS 1997a; USAID 1998a).

However, a partial reconciliation of the statements of OLS and its critics can be reached through the consideration that a contingency planning process must make assumptions about the quantities of resources that will be available for interventions. The emergency preparedness project to which OLS referred, described in the Appeal which had been

published two or three weeks after the exodus from Wau (though possibly prepared beforehand), had significantly stated:

> In the event of increased fighting in the coming year, whether in Juba, with a population of approximately 170,000, or in smaller places, it is likely that a large portion of the civilian population will be affected. It is imperative that OLS has the capacity in place to respond to this situation. Affected populations will either be trapped in the fighting or will scatter into the surrounding countryside. It is extremely difficult to predict the directions in which the populations will move. However, it is probable that after an initial period of dispersal, the displaced would be grouped in IDP transit camps (for a time) requiring significant inputs of humanitarian assistance (until and if they can be reintegrated into their areas of origin). (OCHA 1998a p. 39)

But in the aftermath of the Wau exodus the idea of grouping the displaced in IDP transit camps was not mentioned in OLS's press releases or its widely-circulated reports about the crisis. Indeed, such a strategy would appear to have been contrary to the one espoused by WFP, in the event, of 'avoiding large concentrations of people around limited distribution sites, to prevent resettlement and dependency'(WFP 1998m). It might be argued that the GOS flight ban frustrated the effective implementation of the transit-camp strategy, forcing the agencies to resort to a Plan B involving integration of IDPs into the general population. But it is more plausible to suppose that any transit-camp contingency strategy for Wau could only at most be a tentative option without assurance of the considerable resources needed to make it workable. It is indeed possible that a quick establishment of reception centres for the displaced as they emerged from Wau could have been beneficial at least for purposes of registration and future tracking, if not as distribution centres for the duration of the crisis. Their existence at any rate could have changed the disastrous dynamic of the relief distribution system that actually emerged, in which the displaced tended to be the last to receive relief and the first to die.

Dealing with such an element in a contingency scenario would have been difficult, and OLS apparently failed to grasp that nettle very firmly. It was not impossible for it to do so within its mandate, but it would probably have required a confidence born of assured

resourcing. With capacities clearly in place it would have been easier to go to GOS (either before or after the Wau event) and say: 'We are ready to set up reception centres for the displaced in particular locations, and it is imperative that we should be allowed to do so'. Without the resources for possible enactment, the scenario faded into a limbo of functional ignorance.

2.7 Conclusion

It seems clear from the above that many thousands of people suffered and died in Bahr al-Ghazal as a result of lacking things that humanitarian relief normally aims to provide. The main immediate shortcomings were as follows. Firstly, relief supplies were not delivered to the field early enough in sufficient quantity (and quality: services as well as goods; non-food as well as food; foods high in protein and other nutrients besides those contained in grain). Ideally, a full ration of food, and comprehensive non-food assistance should have been provided at the beginning of February to those displaced from Wau and the other attacked GOS towns. Abundant relief interventions in the host communities would also have been appropriate from that time, as there is strong reason to think that distributed food would only trickle down to the most vulnerable under that condition. If there had been much larger quantities of relief between February and May it is likely that far fewer people would have died in the middle of the year. Secondly, the locations of distribution centres, and the reliability and timing of distributions did not spare destitute people from having to walk long distances in search of relief, and then to gather in unhealthy concentrations with poor water, sanitation, shelter facilities. Thirdly, aid agencies in the field were unable to ensure that relief distributions on site took place in such a way – or on such a scale – as to ensure that aid reached the neediest people in adequate quantities. The next chapter will look at the causes of these three shortcomings, with a view to asking how far they may be attributed to failures on the part of governmental donors.

3 WHY WAS RELIEF LATE? GOS, UN OR DONORS TO BLAME?

3.1 INTRODUCTION: CHALLENGING A HAWKISH NARRATIVE

Having established that lateness in the arrival of relief caused many deaths in Bahr al-Ghazal in 1998, the thesis goes on to investigate whether this can be attributed to lateness of disbursal by governmental aid donors. This notion is in tension with a hawkish narrative approach popular in writings about the famine: a view that sees the main problem as GOS's imposition of restrictions on humanitarian air access, and the inability of OLS – or the UN more broadly – to overcome it.

The latter narrative was very much the orthodoxy among actors close to the US government and those who sympathised with its Sudan policy. The US had added Sudan to its list of state sponsors of terrorism in 1993 (US State Department 1994). Osama bin Laden had lived there from 1991 to 1996 and continued to maintain links with important figures in GOS (Taylor and Elbushra 2006). In August 1998 Sudan would be accorded much of the blame for the bombings of US Embassies in East Africa, acts which in the same month elicited a retaliatory US missile strike on a Khartoum pharmaceuticals factory supposed to have been used for manufacturing chemical weapons (de Waal 2003 pp. 217-229). The US anti-terrorism agenda linked with other narrative strands in which GOS was a villain: its human-rights abuses in general (Amnesty International 1995), and in particular in its conduct of the war in southern Sudan (HRW 1994) and its complicity in slavery-like practices (Verney 1997). These concerns had a strong constituency among human rights activists and in a Congressional coalition of the religious right and the black caucus (de Waal 2003 pp. 217-229; Cockett 2010 pp. 146-156). Such an outlook is in line with that of the HRW report on the 1998 famine (Rone 1999) described in Section 1.4.

At this time disgust with the UN, too, was a very strong theme in US politics (Moore and Pubantz 2001 pp. 315-342; Albright 1998). After the end of the Cold War (but still

before the opening-up of the War on Terror) everything that disappointed the hopes of an 'end of history' or 'new world order' under US hegemony, could be associated with the UN, which, if not actually contributing to disorder, was failing to deal with it satisfactorily. The cost and messiness of humanitarian and peacekeeping operations in this period – epitomised by the disastrous US intervention in Somalia in 1993 – intensified this disenchantment. The US fell further behind in its financial contributions to the UN, its subventions being blocked in Congress. For politicians like Jesse Helms, Republican Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee since 1994, this was entirely proper until the UN and its institutions were reformed. His view was especially important in Congress after January 1997, when both houses were dominated by the Republican Party.

The narrative of the Bahr al-Ghazal famine that emphasised restriction of humanitarian access rather than lateness of donations, did have a natural advantage in terms of story-telling: the imposition of flight restrictions was an event, whereas the lack of sufficient donor contributions was not. Initial statements by UN agencies on the exodus of displaced people from Wau at the end of January spoke of an urgent need for relief resources (IRIN 1998b; WFP 1998a), but when GOS imposed its ban on humanitarian flights to the area, that became the headline story. 'Potential "tragedy" looms in southern Sudan with Government suspension of relief flights' announced a UN press release on 6th February (UN 1998c). For the next two months, most OLS situation summaries, while mentioning the shortage of resources, gave prominence to the question of flight access.

This tendency was reproduced when the international news media picked up the story. Hence on 18th March the first report on the humanitarian crisis from the field by a front-rank world newspaper was similarly headlined: 'Famine looming, Sudan curbs relief to rebel-held areas' (McKinley 1998). The first major television reports from the field, broadcast by the BBC and CNN respectively on 7th and 10th April, both stated that GOS was controlling the delivery of relief for political and political and military ends, without mentioning the status of available relief supplies (Dawes 1998b; Bond and others 1998). So when it became clear that famine relief was going to be too late, it was not a long step to focus anger on the access restrictions and what apparently allowed them to happen. The *Washington Times* reported USAID's first major famine donation

under the headline 'U.S. Food Unlikely to Get to Sudan's Needy' (Lupa-Lasaga 1998). On 11th May, Richard Dowden, a well-known British journalist-commentator specialising in African affairs, laid out the story thus:

> Only now when the Khartoum government sense bad publicity from pictures of starving people does it choose to allow the UN to make more flights into South Sudan. And the reaction of the UN? An unctuous thank-you to Khartoum for its 'adequate humanitarian approval'. (Dowden 1998)[16]

The article culminates in an argument that UN rules should be changed so that it would be no longer bound by respect for the national sovereignty of states like Sudan in areas they do not control. Although such fundamental rule changes in the UN would have had to be decided by the international community as a whole, and such political consent is very hard to mobilize, Dowden here represents the responsibility as internal to the UN organization, making rhetorical use of the way the rules become linked to human traits like unctuousness. He thus plays to an agenda in which the UN is to be disciplined through financial austerity rather than empowered through more generous funding.

> A more determined UN which spoke truth and recognised reality instead of diplomatic niceties might also find donors more willing to provide the funds it desperately needs. (ibid.)

The Administrator of USAID, J. Brian Atwood, depicted the human dimension more concretely in an article for the *Washington Post* and *International Herald Tribune* in early August (Atwood 1998). He endorsed comments by Senator Bill Frist suggesting that OLS had been 'feckless in implementing relief programs because its operations largely have been controlled by the government of Sudan' and went on:

> Our expectations that the UN representative would blow the whistle on such blatant manipulation of a humanitarian relief program never was fully realized. Hence the legitimate criticism of Operation Lifeline.

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[16] A similar point is made in a similar way in an 18th July article for the *Economist* (Economist 1998a), for which Dowden was the chief writer on Africa.

Atwood's attitude is reflected in a paper ostensibly written to record 'lessons learned' from the late response to the famine (Salinas 1998). This apparently stands (as of August 2010) as the most substantial account of the disaster on the USAID website. It refers not only to 'the need for strong leadership in the OLS' but also the desirability of reforming the bureaucracy of OLS, which is considered 'unwieldy', and of readiness for robust action to enforce the OLS agreement through the UN Security Council. Such arguments, implicitly holding the UN responsible for the failure, will be further discussed in Section 3.4.1.

The present chapter sets such ideas against a careful account of the provision of relief resources by governmental donors to OLS (see Sections 3.2 and 3.3).[17] The account of donations begins to problematize the hawkish narrative, in showing that OLS suffered from a crippling lack of resources at the same time as facing access problems. As the chapter unwinds through a detailed analysis of the politics of flight restrictions (Section 3.4), it shows that the lateness of donations was probably as much a cause as a result of them, and that both these phenomena were conditioned by larger dynamics of international politics.

3.2 A GRAPHICAL OVERVIEW

Diagram 2, on the next page, provides an overview of some of the main proximate factors for the timing of relief deliveries to Bahr al-Ghazal in 1998.

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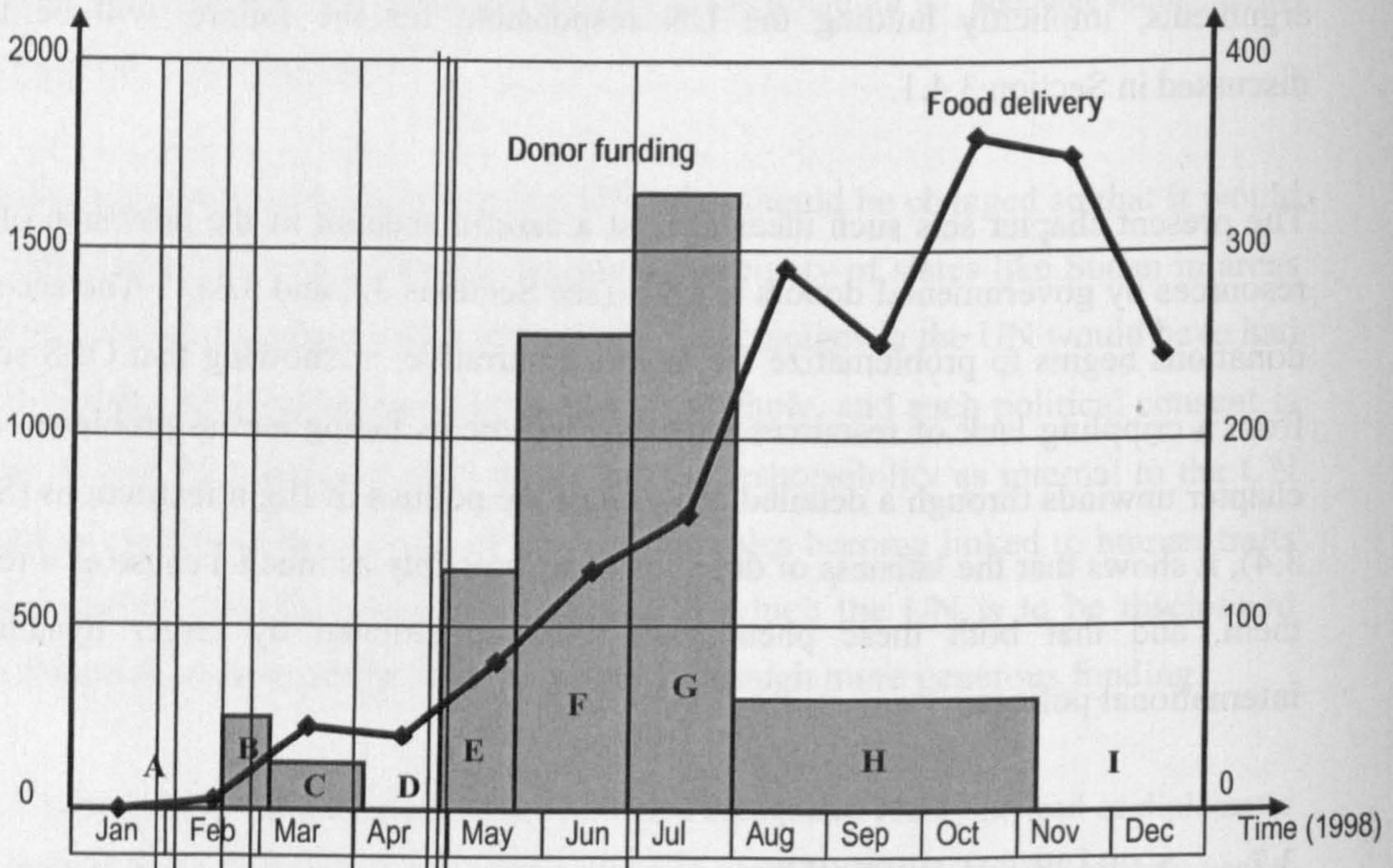
[17] It focuses particularly on resources for food delivery channelled through WFP, which comprised far and away the largest proportion of the aid. Such a focus is not intended to imply that food relief was or should have been the only significant form of famine alleviation; but a detailed consideration of other forms of assistance would have been too complex for the present study.

Diagram 2: The changing rate of WFP food delivery and some factors influencing it



Start of mass displacement from Wau

Start of flight ban

Official launch of UN appeal

Flight ban lifted for six destinations

Flight ban lifted for 51 out of 55 destinations

GOS allows increase from 1 to 2 large planes.

First major donation by USAID

Kofi Anan on Africa trip highlights the need for relief in Sudan.

WFP launches expanded appeal.

GOS allows increase from 2 to 5 large planes.

Annan appeals for more aid.

GOS allows increase from 5 to 12 large planes.

WFP increases target population and appeal figures.

Notes

1. On the food delivery data, see the notes to Diagram 1 on page 36.
2. The areas of the grey blocks indicate the value of donations reportedly provided to WFP Sudan under current appeals. The daily rate of donation is averaged over the period between reports on the status of the WFP appeal on Sudan. Details of the calculation are set out in Annexe 2.
3. For problems of interpreting this data see the main text.

Before launching into an interpretation of the graph, some caveats are necessary. The data for donations and food deliveries on which it is based should not be taken as precise or unquestionable. The diagram is offered mainly as a starting point for the more detailed investigation which follows it. The food delivery data is, as explained in the notes to Diagrams 1 (p. 53) and 2, taken from a credible secondary source but is not definitive. The representation of the reported donations is even more rough-and-ready. The Financial Tracking System currently run by OCHA does not cover such information as far back as 1998, nor was systematic access to this information provided by WFP or OCHA upon the present author's request. Ways of counting and reporting on donations were more poorly standardised then than now (which is not to say they are satisfactory now). The British aid minister at the time complained:

> There is a problem with UN appeals. When the first appeal is made, when money is pledged they do not count it for public purposes until the money is spent [apparently meaning transferred by the donor] so they know of money but in public statements it is not included. I have had a discussion with Mr De Mello who is the new Head of the Humanitarian Co-ordination Office who fully accepts that part of the reform and improvement of the UN system and tighter co-ordination is tightening up on all these things. (Wells and others 1998a Question 31)

The matter was further complicated by the facts that WFP's Emergency Operation plans and budgets overlapped with those of the UN Consolidated Appeals, and that the periods of several months needed to procure and transport food (both inter-continentally and more locally) meant that the food used in one year or project period had often been donated in a previous one. If WFP did not hold enough carry-over stocks from the previous project period, it could often borrow food belonging to a different project.[18] Any contribution of food or the money to purchase food had to be accompanied by a donor commitment to provide funds for transportation of that food to its intended destination (WFP 2008; 2009). In the case of Bahr al-Ghazal, the final stage of

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18 The US General Accounting Office discovered that USAID's food aid through WFP in 1992 arrived on average almost eight months after each request. Nevertheless, it 'found no cases in which victims of emergencies went without food as a result of the slow U.S. responses. This was because WFP used other stocks until U.S. donations arrived' (Johnson 1994 p. 6). This practice of borrowing was taken to be important in the present context by the British aid minister (Short 1998b Para. 23).

transportation – usually by air – was by far the largest cost element. It was another question whether donor funds would be remitted in such a way as to allow them to be used for the rapid transportation of borrowed food stocks, and how far this process would be facilitated by WFP's internal financial processes. Public statements about donations were almost always inexplicit about how soon they – the food or the money or both – could have an impact on rates of delivery to the field. Different offices of WFP conveyed apparently-conflicting information. Thus in mid-May, while a WFP press release stated that WFP had received $13.9 million in pledges for its emergency programme in Sudan (WFP 1998d), a WFP operational office for the Southern Sector was listing donor contributions for the current operation valued at $28.6m (WFP/OLS-SS 1998a; 1998b; 1998c). The former was evidently based on pledges received specifically for a new version of an appeal, the latter on the total value of donations associated with food stocks in various stages of transportation and storage, much of which had been initiated the previous year.

The donation data in the graph is based on press office accounts of new pledges received for WFP's Sudan operations (both Northern and Southern Sectors) in relation to 1998 appeals. Additional caution should be used in relating these to the depicted food delivery data, which refers specifically to deliveries for Bahr al-Ghazal. The parallel scales on the vertical axis should not be taken as implying that the cost of delivering a tonne to Bahr al-Ghazal was $5000 (the actual figure was more like $2000).

Having said all this, the data shown on the graph are still useful. There is a clear relationship between the reported rate of new donations and the rate of relief deliveries, even though the exact causality of this relationship is a matter for further investigation. The conjunction of substantial new donations, and increases in the rate of relief delivery in February-March and again between April and July, is probably not merely coincidental. It is likely that the new pledges had a rapid impact on food deliveries by underwriting the borrowing of regionally-available food stocks, and the release of funds to transport them. By the same token, the graph provides initial reason to suspect that the low level of relief delivery in the early part of the year was at least partly caused by a lack of donations.

Another striking feature of the graph is the fairly steady increase in the rate of relief delivery throughout most of the year. This suggests a phenomenon of gradual gearing-up. The small access of funds in February and March seems to get the process started, and the larger-scale donations of May to July give it a strong boost, but the peak of deliveries does not occur until well after the rate of donations has subsided. The dynamics that account for this may be several and complex. One of them is suggested by the relationship between donations and deliveries. The fact that the rate of donations increases markedly from May to July conveys the possibility of a feedback relationship with relief deliveries in those months: that the increasing deliveries at this stage (though not at every stage) may have help bring about further donations, probably through the publicity that was given to the famine relief operations.

These observations on the graph are supported, explained and amplified by additional available information which is drawn in and interpreted in the following sections.

3.3 PROXIMATE FACTORS: LAGS, LATE DONATIONS AND FLIGHT RESTRICTIONS

3.3.1 Underfunding and residual donations in 1997

It is important initially to note the fact that OLS had been starved of funding in the preceding years. For 1996, OLS received only about 52 per cent of the $106 million it requested for Sudan in the UN Consolidated Inter-agency Appeal (DHA 1997). For 1997 the response was only 40 per cent of $121 million (OCHA 1998a). In November 1997, the funding situation was so dire that OLS launched a special interim appeal for $2.7 million, warning that its available resources would cover only 50 per cent of the food needs projected for December and January (FEWS 1997c). Although the appeal was presented as required because of an immediate constraint on relief delivery, its main significance was longer-term. It took advantage of the phenomenon of 'Christmas dumping' in which donors offloaded leftover funds and food surpluses at the end of the year (Porter 2002 p. 31). This appeal elicited significant donations of food grains to WFP; at the start of February the organization reported that it had already received 19 per cent of the resources it needed for 1998 (WFP 1998a; WFP/OLS-SS 1998a). Despite the fact that this donated food would only arrive later in 1998, it was not strictly a contribution to the 1998 Consolidated Appeal; rather it was used to reduce the aid

requirements stated in that appeal (see Section 5.2.3). Nevertheless, as it turned out, the timing made it an important factor in the famine relief operation. On the strength of these donations in the pipeline, WFP's Sudan Southern Sector office was able to borrow food stocks from its Kenya programme, which kept the operation going, albeit at a low level, in the early months of 1998. Thus by early May the Southern Sudan operation was in debt to the Kenya programme to the tune of almost three thousand tonnes of cereals (WFP/OLS-SS 1998a; 1998b; 1998c). The switching of commodities originally intended for a different situation may have been responsible for the delivery to Bahr al-Ghazal of the un-milled wheat which (as described in Section 2.4) was so grossly inappropriate for famine victims. After that, much of the physical supply of relief delivered at the most crucial period of the crisis seems to have consisted of food that had been donated in 1997.

3.3.2 Late donations and flight restrictions

Although significant famine warnings were issued as early as October 1997 (see Section 4.3), if there was one moment when a very serious situation became critical it was at the end of January 1998, when tens of thousands of people fled Wau and other GOS garrison towns. This point is taken here to be the start of the crisis.

GOS announced its ban on all humanitarian flights to Bahr al-Ghazal on 3rd February (UN 1998c; Short 1998b) with the consequence that there were no significant air relief deliveries for the following 23 days. GOS by its own account authorised more than two dozen individual flights during this period, only a handful of which were taken up (Bireedo 1998 Annex A). It later argued that this showed OLS lacked the required resources to implement the needed relief at that time (Bireedo 1998). Although OLS announced on 2nd February that it lacked resources to meet the humanitarian needs (WFP 1998a), no donations were immediately forthcoming in response to the sudden crisis. When the new Consolidated Appeal was launched, on 18th February, there was one prompt pledge – four million pounds from the UK (Short 1998b Paragraph 26) of which about half went to WFP (AFP 1998b) – but little more up until the end of April, despite successive partial relaxations of the flight restrictions.

Flights were allowed to resume to a limited roster of destinations – Wau, Aweil, Akuem, Pakor, Adet and Ajiep – with effect from 26th February (OLS 1998h; AFP 1998c). The two further destinations of Rumbek and Akak were added in mid-March (USAID 1998a; OLS 1998e). During this time, while public statements by WFP and other UN agencies voiced great concern at the very limited number of permitted flight destinations, they did not indicate strong attempts to increase the quantities of relief delivered to those sites (IRIN 1998c; AFP 1998a; WFP 1998m). This was doubtless partly because the agencies were afraid of creating relief magnets at the few air delivery locations. It is hard to say whether the benefits of being able to give people there better-sized rations would not have been outweighed by the harm of more quickly creating vast, unhealthy and unmanageable camps, although such harm could probably have been mitigated had resources for preparedness and implementation been more generous and reliable. The operation lacked trucks and suitable roads on the ground with which to transport food to dispersed sites. Given the absence of surge capacity, it would hardly have been feasible to put these in place within a few weeks, even if lots of new money had been available. Nevertheless, greater resourcing during February and March would have been useful in order to gear up the air delivery and managerial capacity, even if this was immediately serving parts of the Southern Sector other than Bahr al-Ghazal. That would have allowed a strong flow of delivery to be switched to the crisis area when the geographical restrictions were lifted at the start of April.

At the end of March, GOS assented to almost all the flight locations that OLS proposed for the following month (USAID 1998a). There was still a GOS-imposed limit on flight capacity, in that authorization was needed for any additional aircraft working in Sudan. Until near the end of April the operation's permitted cargo planes consisted of only one C-130 and two Buffaloes for the whole of the Southern Sector (WFP 1998o).[19] On 24th April GOS agreed to allow the deployment of a second C-130, which began flying on 28th April (WFP 1998n). WFP had reported that it was seeking approval for a second

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[19] The C-130 (also known as 'Hercules') type of aircraft could deliver on average about 1,100 tonnes per month to northern Bahr al-Ghazal, air-dropping about 16 tonnes at a time in two or three rotations from its base at Lokichoggio (WFP 1998e; 1998n). The secondary cargo aircraft was the Buffalo type, adept at landing on short and poor-quality airstrips, and capable of transporting on average about 400 tonnes per month (WFP 1998n).

C-130 as early as 3rd April, but, at the same time, '[t]he clearance for the expanded number of delivery sites adds to the urgency of the need for further funds to purchase food and non-food supplies and to support additional aircraft' (WFP 1998q). WFP kept reiterating the message about low supplies of food and cash (IRIN 1998b; WFP 1998a; AFP 1998b; WFP 1998k; BBC 1998d; WFP 1998q). A senior UN official reportedly acknowledged that after the end of March GOS 'consistently responded positively to all of the UN requests for additional air craft'[20].

Thus it is probably the case that the delay in securing the clearance was partly caused by inability to provide aircraft details, caused in turn by a lack of funds with which to book the aircraft. It is also likely that WFP and OLS did not push as hard for the aircraft permits as they could have done because they were at this time experiencing (as a later briefing note put it) 'difficulties in securing the [food] pipeline, caused in some part by poor funding' (OLS 1998e). An employee of WFP at this period later recalled: 'We were saying we needed access while we needed food and planes' (Interview 2005c). Towards the end of April GOS was expressing surprise at the lack of relief response to the relaxation of access conditions (Sudan Update 1998a). The British Secretary of State for International Development, Clare Short, was at the same time claiming the problem was not one of donor resources (Hansard 1998b cols 331-338). But when a UK Parliamentary committee asked whether there had been any point in the crisis when food had not been delivered because of resource shortage while access was available, her department did not – perhaps could not – give a proper answer. It merely supplied a list of WFP information on the history of flight permissions, aircraft in operation, and quantities despatched (Wells and others 1998b; 1998a).

3.3.3 Operational gearing-up in mid-1998

Access increased greatly after 4th May, when GOS agreed for the humanitarian air fleet to be augmented with three more C-130s (bringing the total of C-130s to five) and a

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[20] Letter from OCHA's Assistant Emergency Relief Coordinator to the Sudan Minister of Foreign Relations, 4rd May 1998, quoted in Bireedo (1998). It should be noted that '[r]esponded positively' might not mean 'responded promptly without difficult conditionality', but it does suggest that there was no immoveable obstacle at this point. The MSF group of NGOs later complained that 'despite open air space from April...WFP failed to significantly scale up relief food deliveries...until August' (MSF 1999a).

further Buffalo (making total of three Buffaloes) (WFP 1998o). Alongside this dramatic opening of access, donors announced substantial new grants of food and cash. But these actions could have little effect on relief deliveries until the middle of the month because stocks in Lokichoggio were still very limited. At the end of April, WFP had reported (WFP 1998n; Dufka 1998) that it held 500 tonnes of cereals in Lokichoggio and had 3,500 en route from Mombasa that were due to arrive in Lokichoggio in mid-May. 500 tonnes was not nearly enough for either half a month of delivery *capacity* (since two C-130s alone could deliver 2,200 tonnes per month) or half a month of delivery *requirement* (which was at that time being put at over 3,600 tonnes per month for Bahr al-Ghazal, and 6,000 for the Southern Sector as a whole). Unluckily, just at the moment when the new food supplies were beginning to arrive in mid-May, the supply both of food and aircraft fuel was interrupted when heavy rains washed away a number of bridges in northern Kenya (Beaumont 1998b; WFP 1998e; Dawes 1998c). The two new Lokichoggio-based C-130s, which had begun flying on 13th and 14th May (DFID 1998b; USAID 1998c) almost immediately had to stop for a few days. The El-Obeid-based C-130 did not start its work until 7th June (BBC 1998b). However in the latter part of May a quick and steady acceleration of relief deliveries began, and in late June WFP announced that OLS had obtained permission to increase the number of aircraft from five to twelve (WFP 1998g).

Although not much relief could be delivered in the first half of May, the new surge of donor support meant that a process of organizational gearing-up could begin. A complex of infrastructural elements had to be developed or expanded. A prime element among these was a larger fleet of aircraft, but C-130s with suitable airdrop systems were not readily available in the world market (WFP/OLS 1999). When the planes were found, arrangements had to be made to secure a reliable fuel supply to keep them flying. By mid-May about sixteen tankers were under contract to transport aircraft fuel in Kenya for the Southern Sector operation, from the end of the pipeline at Eldoret to the main air base at Lokichoggio. Meanwhile many new field monitors had urgently to be recruited, briefed, trained and deployed; the number of WFP field staff rose from 23 in March to about 100 in November (WFP 1998e; Macaskill 2000 pp. 194-195). All this needed more managers and management hours, more office equipment, and adjustments to the ways that offices were integrated with one another. The process of strengthening these elements and the links between them was a cumulative one and at each stage the

rate of advance had to be gauged bearing in mind what the funding situation and perceived needs would be a few weeks later, when the measures would begin to take effect. The combination of the lateness of donation and the lag involved in gearing-up goes a long way to explaining why the delivery of relief did not peak until October.

3.4 THE POLITICS OF FLIGHT RESTRICTIONS

What did humanitarian agencies and their donors do to combat the flight restrictions? Could they have done more? A natural-seeming response of NGOs and other activists to the restrictions was to demand the international community 'put pressure' (a usefully inexplicit phrase) on the warring parties to allow access. The New Sudan Council of Churches, for one, in an appeal as early as 5th February, declared: 'More pressure should be exerted on the government to reverse its [flight ban] decision, and allow OLS and other humanitarian agencies to airlift relief food to the affected civilians' (NSCC 1998a). The British government affirmed that pressure was being put. In late April and early May Clare Short repeatedly argued that humanitarian purposes would best be served by supporting international efforts to exert 'pressure on the Government of Sudan and the southern factions' to facilitate access (Hansard 1998b col. 351; Watt 1998; Hansard 1998a). She later claimed that 'donor pressure' was to thank for eventual removal of the flight restrictions (Short 1998b paras 22 and 28).

The Clinton administration in the US later took the line that it *would* have exerted pressure, if it had been alerted to the problem by those responsible. White House staff briefed *Time* that they were 'furious' at USAID 'for not sounding the alarm sooner' (Nelan and others 1998). USAID Administrator Atwood was thus passing the buck when he published his disappointment that the UN representative in Khartoum did not 'blow the whistle on such blatant manipulation of a humanitarian relief program' (Atwood 1998).

The present section looks deeper at the politics of the flight restrictions. It begins by arguing that the UN representative in Khartoum was not in the position of a policeman on the lookout for violations of an established code. As the head of OLS his legal position was very shaky, an assemblage of mere scraps of contract accumulated through the history of the operation since 1989. The conditions of the relief programme were

determined by an interplay of interests and sanctions rather than conformity to a rule-book. To understand the possibilities that existed for securing access, it is necessary next to gain a realistic understanding of GOS motives for imposing the flight restrictions. The section also looks in detail at the pressures that *were* exerted, and the process in which this happened, before evaluating what measures might have been more effective from a humanitarian point of view.

3.4.1 Flight restrictions illegal or uncontractual?

The UNCERO for Sudan when the Government imposed its flight ban was Christophe Jaeger, someone regarded by many in the US Government and aid agencies as a functionary too friendly with GOS (African Rights 1997 p. 173; Lancaster 1997). He presided (as may be recalled from Section 1.3.2) over an OLS administrative apparatus which, although recognised by most as very cumbersome, was hard to reform. The combination of the role of UNCERO with that of the UNDP Resident Representative involved a clash of interests. Whereas the latter post demanded a consistently constructive relationship with GOS, the job of heading OLS would ideally have enjoyed more independence in order to defend the operation's aspiration to humanitarian neutrality. After this was pointed out in a review of OLS (Karim and others 1996 pp. 31-35), a Humanitarian Coordination Unit (HCU) was in 1997 established for the UNCERO under the auspices of OCHA[21] rather than UNDP (DHA 1997 Section F.1.2). OCHA had a mandate to take a relatively strong line on matters of advocacy (OCHA Sudan [n.d.]). In February 1998 Jaeger was due shortly to leave his job. After his departure the HCU noted critically that, although he 'did occasionally raise human rights violations in a discreet manner' with GOS, this was 'not on a regular basis' (HCU 1998a). According to HCU, Jaeger even omitted to protest about 'gross human rights violations against beneficiary populations in Wau, which occurred in the early weeks of February' in the aftermath of the heavy fighting in Wau (ibid.).

Nevertheless, other OLS agencies did consistently and publicly complain that the GOS flight ban was a crippling constraint on vital relief activity (UN 1998c; WFP 1998b;

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[21] Strictly speaking, HCU was initially established under the UN's Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA), but this department was being transformed into OCHA.

AFP 1998a). OCHA was the most outspoken. It immediately responded to the flight ban with a statement which, by UN standards, was unusually accusatory, declaring that 'the Government of the Sudan had denied humanitarian agencies access to recently displaced populations' (UN 1998c), language which reached toward a suggestion of criminality.

The differences of tone between actors within the UN might conceivably have been used as an asset in negotiations, as part of a good cop/bad cop approach. But it probably was not as well-organised as that. Development of a coherent negotiating strategy was hindered by the imminent departure of Jaeger. There was a gap of several months before the arrival of his successor, Philippe Borel (HCU 1998a). The timing of this change of personnel was probably a mixture of bad luck, poor management, and wrangling between donor governments and other stakeholders about acceptable candidates. But whatever the problems of UN staffing, the hand they had to play was weaker than it might have seemed.

Although some activists were even more assertive than OCHA in claiming that the flight restrictions were breaches of international law (e.g. NSCC 1998a), such claims were tenuous (Griffiths and others 1995 pp. 40-44). Article 38 of the Fourth Geneva Convention states that 'protected persons...shall be enabled to receive the individual or collective relief that may be sent to them', but the envisaged context is international war, and 'protected persons' is here (Article 4) defined as people 'in the hands of a Party to the conflict or Occupying Power of which they are not nationals' and, moreover, who are nationals of a state bound by the Convention. The SPLM/A had argued that it was a sovereign entity, and had committed itself to respecting the Geneva Conventions through signing the OLS Ground Rules (Levine 1997), but these acts were not legally strong. The 1977 Additional Protocol II, relating to non-international armed conflict, made express provision for relief actions 'of an exclusively humanitarian and impartial nature', but only 'subject to the consent of the High Contracting Party concerned' (Article 38). This meant subject to GOS consent, since Sudan had acceded both to the 1949 Geneva Conventions and to the 1977 Protocols.

Rather than arguing on the basis of international law in general, some Western actors and commentators preferred to focus on the humanitarian contract supposedly entered

into by GOS in the OLS agreement. USAID's 'lessons learned' paper (Salinas 1998) stated: 'The GOS and the SPLA signed an international agreement in 1989 in which they agreed to secure "corridors of tranquility" for the delivery of food aid'. On this basis, it argued, a high-level international body such as the UN Security Council should take action to 'hold the GOS accountable'. Yet the corridors stipulated in 1989 had been specific and limited; in theory they included rail transport to Aweil and road deliveries from the North to Raga and Wau, but they made no provision for distribution from those points into the SPLM/A-held rural areas of Bahr al-Ghazal (GOS and UN 1989; Minear and others 1991 p. 30). Moreover, contrary to what Salinas believed, the agreement was not signed (HCU 1998b p. 1); indeed, it was only implicit, being embodied in an action plan for the months of April to November 1989, publicly countenanced by GOS and tolerated by the SPLM/A in its areas of control (GOS and UN 1989; Minear and others 1991 pp. 1-24). A military coup in Sudan at the end of June removed the parliamentary government that had legitimated the original agreement. Nevertheless, the de facto consent of the new junta to the continuance of the initial Plan of Action was quickly used by the UN as the starting-point for a General Assemby resolution recognising OLS and encouraging the renewal of the programme (UN 1989; see also GOS and UN 1990 pp. 1-2).

Although it was in the interest some to suggest otherwise, the history of OLS negotiated access was not one of free agents entering into clear contracts, but one in which changes to the condition of the operation were arrived at through a constant game of obstacles and concessions, threats and rewards, in which all sides tried to formalize helpful precedents and deny or ignore unhelpful ones (HCU 1998b). Since the UN agencies had already started working in the rebel-held areas, it was hard for GOS – on pain of international outrage – to give them a definitive command to move out. But tactically the government could obstruct aid agency work in more subtle ways, through restrictive regulations and bureaucratic hold-ups in the issuing of travel permissions, flight clearances, visas, import licenses and so on (Karim and others 1996 pp. 46-50; HCU 1998a). Such measures could be relaxed and tightened as implicit concessions and punishments in relations with a variety of actors. Above all, GOS could resist formally signing away its sovereign rights. It is worth illustrating this by briefly going through the history of OLS between 1989 and 1998.

UN officials failed to secure a tripartite treaty for a second phase of OLS in 1990 (OLS 1992). Relief activity went ahead on the basis of a 'Background Appeal Document' issued in the joint names of the UN and GOS (GOS and UN 1990). Into this were written some 'key principles' which the UN later represented as elements of an ongoing agreement (OLS n.d. [c.1996]).[22] GOS declared the end of OLS II in October 1990 (Burr and Collins 1995 p. 285), but in late 1991 a crisis of forced migration on the Ethiopia border provided cause for a renewed expansion of relief activities, including air access to rebel-held areas. For GOS this operation initially had the advantage of helping foment splits in the rebel movement (African Rights 1997 pp. 262-277). But GOS pegged back the issuing of flight permits in 1992. In December of that year, however, the UN was able to use the diplomatic mobilization and legal precedent of the military-humanitarian intervention in Somalia to wring a new relief agreement for southern Sudan (UNICEF/OLS 1992; UNICSS 1992; Karim and others 1996 p. 42; African Rights 1997 p. 295). Although the key document was only one page long and – again – unsigned, it opened the prospect of near-comprehensive humanitarian air access, in which flight denials rather than flight approvals could be seen as the exception.

The only formally-signed tripartite agreements on OLS were concluded in March and May 1994 as products of a high-profile peace process under the auspices of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD)[23] (GOS and others 1994a; 1994b). By this time OLS was established de facto as a continuous institution. The 1994 agreements did not profess to create a founding mandate for it, but appeared to build on an existing structure. The period to which they applied was not mentioned. Some of their provisions, such as facilitation of an immunization campaign, clearly referred to a time-frame of only a few months, and they specified operational oversight by the IGADD peace committee: a function which, if it was ever exercised in more than a nominal way, did not persist long after the breakdown of IGADD's peace initiative in September 1994. In spatial terms, too, their contents, like those of previous OLS documents, in specifying the particular lists of aircraft destinations and corridors for

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[22] These principles included: humanitarian neutrality, the primacy of concern with 'the basic welfare of citizens', and the legitimacy of UN dealings with the SPLM/A over relief.

[23] IGADD's member states were Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Kenya, Somalia (in principle) and Uganda.

road, river and rail transport, risked undermining the general principle of humanitarian access to people wherever they needed relief (Karim and others 1996 pp. 24-29). In November 1995 GOS expressly stated that it was not bound by the 1994 agreement insofar as it implied ongoing collaboration with the SPLM/A (Karim and others 1996 p. 28). OLS refused to acknowledge this declaration, as it would have made a strong foundation for GOS claims to control or co-manage humanitarian operations in the South (HCU 1998b pp. 1-2). At the same time, GOS imposed a ban on aid flights into southern Sudan, which it only lifted two weeks later, when the UN conceded that it would not fly to or over 'war zones' (Karim and others 1996 p. 28).

GOS also pursued its claims at a higher level. In the UN General Assembly at the end of 1996 and 1997 it gained assent to resolutions which, besides general support for aid and humanitarian work in Sudan and other countries,

> stresse[d] the need for Operation Lifeline Sudan to be operated...with the full participation of the Government of the Sudan in its management and operation, including conducting of assessment, allocation, distribution and evaluation processes, as well as consultations in the preparation of the consolidated annual inter-agency appeal for the Operation. (UNGA 1996 para. 2; 1997)

Efforts by the USA and EU to have this stipulation removed from the resolutions were unsuccessful, and rich liberal states consequently voted against the motions on aid in Sudan. Underdeveloped countries, coordinated within the Group of 77 (G77) and acting in solidarity of interest against precedents for interference in national sovereignty, nevertheless ensured that the resolutions were carried with large majorities (UN 1996; 1997). OLS continued to resist the mandated GOS participation as much as it could, arguing that it was contrary to another article in the resolutions which stressed 'the importance of strict observance of the principles and guidelines of Operation Lifeline Sudan' (UNGA 1996; 1997 para. 9). OLS contended that one of those principles was the neutrality of the UN and that such neutrality 'exclude[d] co-management by any of the warring parties' (HCU 1998b pp. 1-2).

For better or worse, there was no international court of law before which such arguments could realistically be brought, no point of traction to stop the casuistry

spinning round. The legalistic discourse served not to resolve disputes but to stabilize them, by reassuring each party that its position was tenable, even though unproven, and helping mobilize its partisans along particular lines. To win meaningful concessions more material threats would be needed.

3.4.2 GOS motives for the flight restrictions

GOS denial of humanitarian flight access was a familiar phenomenon in Sudan long before 1998. In the mid-1990s, almost every month saw refusals to grant access to some destinations requested by OLS (Karim and others 1996 p. 57). These refusals were made for a variety of reasons, stated and unstated. In many ways, the acute restrictions of 1998 represented a continuation of an earlier pattern of restriction, though there were special motives at work.

GOS's professed reason for denial of air access in February 1998 was 'security' (Bireedo 1998; Rone 1999 pp. 86-87). On one level, 'security' referred to the avoidance of collateral damage, injuries and deaths among aid agencies and their associates amid insurgency and counter-insurgency warfare. The UN has a policy of holding host country governments responsible for the safety of its staff and partners. This stance is grounded in the 1994 Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel (UN 1994) and is promoted by the UN even in countries which, like Sudan, have not signed the convention. The UN was in a poor position to second-guess its hosts on the seriousness of such risk. It might have argued that UN markings worked like the red cross symbol, distinguishing aid equipment and personnel from military targets. But any such argument was weakened by the SPLM/A's reluctance to admit a distinction in principle between combatants and civilians when it came to the distribution of relief, and aid agencies' failure to make this distinction in practice. GOS continually accused aid agencies of assisting the rebels and, although charges of smuggling lethal hardware under cover of humanitarian operations were never convincingly backed up, it is undoubtedly true that the SPLA often received substantial benefits from gaining control of ordinary relief supplies, as did the GOS army (see Section 2.6.2 above). In any case, it is quite possibly true that aid activity in the rural areas around Wau and Aweil during the three weeks after Kerubino's attack would have inhibited the GOS army in its

efforts to prevent a follow-up SPLA assault. As late as 12th February aid workers believed the SPLA was occupying Aweil and still contending for Wau (IRIN 1998h).

The military authorities in Wau also needed to exclude foreigners for less legitimate reasons. During the 1990s there were many accounts of the Sudan army and its allies conducting operations in atrocious ways, contrary to the second 1977 Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions (HRW 1994; 1999). The exclusion of aid workers – especially internationals – from vicinities of violence reduced the opportunities for abuses to be credibly reported to the outside world. Nevertheless, many such abuses were documented as occurring in the aftermath of the Wau attack (Rone 1999 pp. 44-83). They included a massacre of Dinka and Jur civilians in the area of the town, destruction of their homes, and bombing of people fleeing to the countryside. Such actions were doubtless motivated by mixtures of emotion and calculation, revenge and exemplary punishment, ethnic hatred and the intention of weakening the rebels' support base. Furthermore, there were material spoils for the fighters; at this time there was a special opportunity for pillage in Wau town itself. Virtually all of the household possessions of the Dinka and Jur population were looted when their owners left town.

So too were assets of UNICEF, WFP and the Sudan Council of Churches. The staff of these organizations had left Wau shortly before Kerubino's attack, prompting GOS accusations that they were in league with the rebels. This was an exaggeration. Knowledge of secrets is not necessarily collusion, and it appears that this particular secret was open to others too; GOS and much of the town's population were also able to anticipate Kerubino's supposed surprise (Rone 1999 pp. 64, 77). But in view of perennial disputes about how far aid operations assisted the rebels there was probably an element of punishment and revenge against the UN and other aid agencies, as well as against the Dinka and Jur peoples, in both the looting and the flight ban. This is further indicated by the facts that the ban covered the whole of Bahr al-Ghazal rather than particular conflict zones, and that while imposing the ban GOS also threatened to declare the Southern Sector Coordinator of OLS *persona non grata* (Rone 1999 p. 88).

The GOS's partial concession toward the end of February – allowing flights to resume to six named locations – was enough to show that by then any period of military exigency had passed, and the restrictions were for other purposes. The geographical

stipulations reflected GOS interest in attracting people back to the two main garrison enclaves of Wau and Aweil, in accordance with its war strategy of depopulating the rural areas of Northern Bahr al-Ghazal and using 'peace camps' as semi-secure buffer zones (African Rights 1997 pp. 249-250). All of the four sites initially permitted in SPLM/A areas were vulnerable to attack. Pakor and Adet were bombed during February (Rone 1999 p. 91), Akuem raided in early March (WFP 1998m), and Ajiep raided in both March and May (UNICEF/OLS 1998b). OLS had requested different sites instead – specifically Acumcum and Mapel (FEWS 1998b), the latter of which was substantially more secure – but they were refused.

Bearing in mind the general suspicion that GOS was using starvation as a weapon of war, one may look at the terrible conditions that developed at Ajiep in particular, and wonder whether GOS deliberately engineered the catastrophic relief magnet effect there (see Section 2.6.2). To suppose so would probably be to attribute unrealistic depth of calculation and purity of malice. Such calculation, although it might be judged successful if the aim had been simply to kill a few thousand more people, would in any case have to be counted as backfiring, in that the SPLA was able to use the relief magnet to supply its troops.

Aside from their coercive characteristics, the flight restrictions were also useful for bargaining purposes. Despite UN agencies' insistence that relief was always allocated 'only on the basis of assessed needs', it had always faced arguments about whether fair proportions were going to the Northern and Southern Sectors of OLS (HCU 1998b p. 2). The stakes were intensified by the crisis in early 1998. As described in Section 3.3, little relief was actually sent to any of the locations during the period of geographically-restricted flight access. For the Southern Sector, this was largely because food supplies were not available at Lokichoggio. For the Northern Sector, it would have been comparatively easy, logistically, for the UN to mobilize food quickly to send to Wau and Aweil. There was a considerable grain surplus in northern Sudan (FAO and WFP 1997; MSF 1999a). In spite of this, the delivery of aid was inadequate from February to May, as described in Section 2.4. The mantra about responding to *assessed* needs, literally interpreted, could produce this effect in a situation where numbers of returnees were increasing all the time. The UN delayed re-posting staff in Wau until April, on grounds of 'security' (HCU 1998d). Mirroring the GOS stance for the rural areas, this

reluctance probably contained a tacit element of punishment for the human rights atrocities and looting of aid agency compounds that had occurred there.

GOS also evidently saw the flight restrictions as a way to pursue its claim for greater control over the management of OLS. The GOS approvals of 34 flights to southern Sudan in February 1998 were on specific dates (Bireedo 1998 Annex A): a feature that went beyond what had hitherto been part of the standard flight clearance format (HCU 1998b p. 3), and partly explains the UN's failure, noted by GOS (Bireedo 1998), to use or report against most of those approvals. GOS had also long been pressing for the creation inside its own territory of an OLS air logistics base as an alternative to Lokichoggio (Karim and others 1996 p. 254; HCU 1998b pp. 4-5). UN agencies were determined to defend the status of Lokichoggio, as the cornerstone of its operational independence. This question featured in negotiations over the flight restrictions, as will be seen below in Section 3.4.4.

GOS's limiting of flight access to a small number of places during February and March, and its control over the licensing of aircraft, thus served purposes of bargaining. Points to be gained included the sending of substantial quantities of food to Wau, and the creation of practices giving GOS greater structural control over OLS. There was also another, more important agenda: the reduction of external military pressure on the Khartoum regime.

3.4.3 Military pressure on GOS

Three of Sudan's neighbours – Eritrea, Ethiopia and Uganda – had, since 1995, been in a covert military alliance supporting the SPLM/A, as a counter-weight to Khartoum's promotion of jihadist groups and activities in the region (Dagne 1997; de Waal 2003 pp. 197-211). By 1996 this alliance of 'Frontline States'[24] had also included Rwanda, which shared with Uganda an interest in overturning the Mobutu regime in Zaire[25]. Both Mobutu and GOS were assisting a Ugandan insurgent group – the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) – which held bases in the eastern part of Zaire. To reduce GOS aid to the

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[24] Dan Connell (1996) was one of the first to use the phrase to signify those of Sudan's neighbours hostile to the Khartoum regime.

[25] Zaire was renamed the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) when Mobutu was ousted, in May 1997.

ADF – and generally protect the flanks of the offensive against President Mobutu – Uganda, Eritrea and Ethiopia in early 1997 assisted the SPLA in capturing territory north of the Ugandan border, including the town of Yei (Connell 1998 Section VI; de Waal 2003). This laid the foundation for the further conquests by the SPLA in Bahr al-Ghazal, and at the same time enabled it to threaten Juba. In addition to Kerubino Kuanyin's attack on Wau, the early part of 1998 saw considerable military gains by Sudanese opposition groups near the borders of Eritrea and Ethiopia, facilitated by the governments and armed forces of those countries (Hoile 2002 pp. 66-68): so much so that a senior member of the SPLM/A on that front talked in mid-March about being 'in the last phase on the road' to overthrowing the Sudan Government (AFP quoted in IRIN 1998i). Meanwhile, another of Sudan's IGAD neighbours – Kenya – while refraining from direct military intervention was operating a well-established policy of allowing SPLM/A leaders and soldiers to use its territory.

These neighbours of Sudan received backing from parts of the wider international community, notably the US. The heads of state of Eritrea, Ethiopia, Uganda, Rwanda (and, briefly, Laurent Kabila in the Democratic Republic of the Congo) were being portrayed in the West as representatives of a promising 'new generation of leaders'[26] in Africa, who could lead the continent away from the corruption and economic mismanagement that had flourished amid post-colonial and Cold-War politics. The 'new generation' trope chimed with 'African renaissance' – a phrase that became current after being used by Thabo Mbeki in 1997 (Rieff 1998) – and such imagery was incorporated in the presentation of a major policy initiative on Africa by the White House that year. In June, President Bill Clinton set out the idea of a 'Partnership for Economic Growth and Opportunity in Africa' – which conveyed optimism about what the combination of democracy and US investment could do on the continent – and he placed the problem of African development high on the agenda of the G7 summit in Denver (Alden 2000 pp. 360-362). But the upbeat tone always coexisted with an underlying concern for US national security and the anti-terrorism agenda. Uganda, Eritrea and Ethiopia had all been receiving military aid from the US since 1995 (Connell 1998 Section VI). A strategy paper produced by the President's National

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[26] This phrase was widely used at the time, for instance in USAID's presentation of its 1998 plans to Congress (USAID 1997).

Security Council (NSC) in May 1997 had put the 'Partnership' initiative very much in the context of a security-driven desire to render Africa 'stable' by 'integrat[ing] it into the global economy' (NSC 1997). A new Assistant Secretary of State for Africa, Susan Rice, who had come to the post from the NSC, echoed the concerns and language of this paper in a speech at her swearing-in ceremony in October: 'Stable, growing, democratic African countries will be more effective partners for the US as we seek to work together to combat transnational threats' (Rice 1997).

Rice's new appointment reflected and promoted a more aggressive US policy on Sudan (Sudan Update 1997b; Schraeder 1998; Metz 2000). Whereas in January 1997 an official had expressed the administration's perplexity on this question – admitting that USG lacked proof that Sudan was currently hosting terrorist training camps, and viewing a military overthrow of the regime as 'wishful thinking' (ARB 1997b) – by mid-year a division had clearly emerged between hawks and doves. The military advances of the SPLA and its allies that year sufficiently alarmed GOS to bring it back to the Sudan peace process under the regional body IGADD/IGAD, which it had derailed in 1994.[27] President Bashir announced this at the meeting of the IGAD heads of state in July 1997. The concession encouraged some in the US State Department and diplomatic service to intensify constructive engagement with GOS; but for others in Washington it was a sign that the military successes of the rebels and frontline states were having a real and favourable effect (Dagne 1997; Sudan Update 1997a; 1997c). In the middle of the first new round of IGAD peace talks, in November 1997, President Clinton took the part of the hawks by signing an executive order for economic sanctions against Khartoum, a move whose timing suggested that US was more interested even than the SPLM/A in maintaining aggression against GOS (ARB 1997a). Secretary of State Madeleine Albright reinforced the uncompromising posture during a tour of African countries in December 1997, in which she proclaimed US determination to '"work to isolate the Sudanese regime and contain its ability to support terrorism and destabilize its neighbours"' (Kakande 1998). In Uganda she met leaders of the National Democratic Alliance, an umbrella group for the outlawed Sudanese opposition parties

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[27] IGADD had in 1996 been succeeded by IGAD, the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development. Sudan had in 1994 refused to accept the Declaration of Principles backed by IGADD for the peace process; its re-engagement meant revoking this objection (Johnson 2003 p. 175).

including the SPLM/A and other active insurgents (ibid.). President Museveni simultaneously confirmed (ibid.) that Uganda had received US military supplies which had been promised to it (and to Eritrea and Ethiopia) the previous year (de Waal 2003 p. 220). By early 1998 the idea that the US might assist those states to overthrow the Khartoum regime seemed far less fanciful than it had a year earlier (Schraeder 1998 p. 3; Economist 1998b; Steele 1998a).

The international military pressure on Sudan probably hindered attempts to gain humanitarian access more than it supported them. In the aftermath of the attack on Wau, the Sudan army's desire for a free hand in the city and its surrounding area was facilitated by a sense that GOS was thereby punishing the humanitarians for the extent to which their relief was helping the SPLM/A. When the situation cooled a little, control over humanitarian access became one of the few assets that GOS could use in meaningful negotiations with the international community to reduce the continuing military pressure. This might not have been so, had the international community as a whole shared the hard hostility of the US and the Frontline States. But many European nations in particular took a relatively conciliatory line. A steady dialogue with such interlocutors over several months suited GOS, as it provided some diplomatic protection against sudden attacks. Although the Government's failure to provide complete humanitarian access no doubt counted against it in the broad international community, it was defensible on the grounds of a sovereign right to maintain military security. On the positive side, GOS was now able to present itself as more constructively engaged in the peace process than the SPLM/A. The benefit to GOS of prolonged diplomatic engagement partly explains why its relaxation of access restrictions was delivered in instalments.

The apex of open US belligerence against GOS (until its missile strike on Khartoum in August) was reached on 25th March when President Clinton, during a landmark trip to Africa, met heads of state from Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia, DRC, Rwanda and Tanzania in Entebbe. The meeting produced an "Entebbe Declaration of Principles" which included attention to regional security, African peacekeeping capacity, and cross-border terrorism (IRIN 1998g). Sudan, though not publicly named, was clearly a prime focus of these concerns. At least one scholar has seen this meeting starkly as 'intended to prepare for war' on Sudan (Strizek 2004).

3.4.4 Chronological account of access negotiations

The regaining of humanitarian access involved a great deal of diplomatic trading. Reporting the 4th February flight ban on 6th February, the UN stated that OLS was 'in close contact with government authorities in order to resolve this issue' (UN 1998c). On 10th February GOS gave hope that it would lift the ban 'shortly', but the process was apparently set back by a plane crash on 12th February, which killed Sudan's First Vice President (Rone 1999 pp. 88-89). The following day the heads of UNICEF and WFP and the UN Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs sent letters on the matter to senior members of the government. But there was no apparent progress until the last week of February, when the UN Secretary-General sent a special envoy, Ambassador Robert van Schaik, with a personal message to the Sudanese President (ibid.). Van Schaik indicated that OLS would be prepared experimentally to use El Obeid, in Northern Sudan, as the base for a large transport plane in addition to the Lokichoggio base (HCU 1998b p. 4). Even after the Presidential meeting, GOS officials linked the lifting of the ban to a needs-assessment in which they were involved (AFP 1998c), so that, when flights were allowed to resume to the six named locations, those places were associated with estimates of needy population (Rone 1999 p. 89). On the relaxation of the ban, the European Union, prompted by the Dutch government (van Schaik was the Dutch Ambassador at the UN), made a joint demarche to the Sudanese Ambassador in Vienna which combined formal gratitude with a stern and faintly threatening posture, in urging GOS 'not to hinder or delay deliveries of humanitarian assistance in the future' (USAID 1998a).

The lifting of the wider restriction on flight destinations, at the end of March, was more distinctly connected with diplomacy around the question of war and peace in Sudan. Although GOS forces had apparently repelled the SPLA attack on Wau, a resumption of the rebels' advance still seemed a real possibility. As the dry season neared its end there was speculation that the SPLA would attack the largest southern city, Juba (SCIO 1997; FEWS 1998b; Economist 1998b) or prevent the pumping of oil from Sudan's first major oilfield at Bentiu (Wrong 1998). Consequently, GOS was looking to gain international pressure for a ceasefire. Following the first new round of IGAD peace talks in November 1997, the continuance of the process was on the agenda of an IGAD summit to be held at Djibouti in mid-March (IGAD 1998). In advance of the summit, Sudan's

Foreign Minister, Mustafa Osman Ismail, called for a ceasefire in order to foster '"a proper atmosphere of peace"' (Hoile 2002 p. 69). The summit supported this, calling for the conflicting parties 'to work together towards a cease-fire so as to provide a conducive environment' for the talks to be held in April (IGAD 1998 p. 9). An IGAD delegation followed this up with a visit to Sudan's president on 28th March and it is likely that, at the same time, it encouraged the removal of the humanitarian flight restrictions.

This was immediately reinforced by the visit to Khartoum of an Italian foreign affairs minister, Rino Serri. Italy was at that point chair of the IGAD International Partners' Forum, a group also comprising the US, UK, Netherlands and Norway, which supported IGAD financially and diplomatically. At the first ministerial-level meeting of the Forum, in Rome in January 1998, the group had endorsed a 'shuttle diplomacy' approach to addressing the Sudan conflict (Hoile 2002 p. 66). Serri reportedly promised to try to help Sudan improve relations with Eritrea and Ethiopia (UNDP 1998). At his request, GOS formally agreed greatly to relax the restrictions on humanitarian access to Bahr al-Ghazal (Sudan Update 1998a). 51 of the 55 destinations requested by OLS in the region were now permitted. But, said Sudan's foreign minister, the concession was only a temporary measure aimed at '"creating a suitable atmosphere for the success of forthcoming peace negotiations"' (IRIN 1998f). He called for '"the international community to convince the rebels...to accept the cease-fire arrangement"' (Hoile 2002 p. 69). The Italian minister appeared to accept the implicit subordination of humanitarian access to the problem of stopping the fighting. He commented: '"this is a good step and we want the SPLA to positively respond to the call for a ceasefire"' (ibid. p. 66).

Once the restriction on flight destinations was removed, aircraft capacity emerged as a crucial constraint for humanitarian access. Reporting the concession on 3rd April, WFP mentioned that it was 'currently seeking approval from the Government for a second C-130 Hercules aircraft to be used in the operation' (WFP 1998q) without indicating that this was more than a routine matter. But after the first television reports with pictures of starvation from the field (see Section 4.3.2), the tone suddenly became much more insistent. On 21st April WFP issued a press release warning of 'catastrophe...unless it receive[d] permission to double or triple its airlift of food aid to southern Sudan within a

matter of days' (WFP 1998c). This abrupt increase in urgency probably reflected increased donor attention to the famine threat. GOS issued permission for a second C-130 two days later (Short 1998b Para. 23). According to the British aid minister, it was given 'as a result of pressure from donors' (ibid.). If so, some of this pressure was mobilised around a session of the UN High Commission for Human Rights (UNHCHR) on 21st April, at which the US introduced a resolution on Sudan (USAID 1998a). In the resolution the commission 'expresse[d] its outrage' at the forcible disruption and obstruction of relief efforts 'by all parties to the conflict' (UNHCHR 1998 para. 3). The holding-back from singling-out GOS kept in reserve the potential for further escalation of diplomatic fury.

This permission for a second C-130 was only a prelude to what was be presented as the main breakthrough. Intense diplomatic networking was organized around a visit to eastern and central Africa by the UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, between 29th April and 11th May. This overlapped with IGAD's Sudan peace talks, whose start was at a late stage rescheduled from 30th April to 4th May, and which ended on 6th May (ARB 1998). Annan had decided to focus largely on Sudanese issues during his trip (Rosenthal 1998). En route to Africa, on 28th April, he stopped at Frankfurt, where he met the German Foreign Minister, who had just returned from a visit to Sudan and Djibouti. The latter state was due to take over the chairmanship of IGAD from Kenya (UN 1998d). While Annan travelled on, the EU under British presidency issued a call for an immediate ceasefire, nominally addressed to 'both sides' or 'all sides' (Hansard 1998b Column 331; Sudan Update 1998b; Hoile 2002 p. 71). Since GOS was already calling for this, the EU's statement served largely as a move of compliance with the GOS's request for the international community to 'convince the rebels' of the need to talk peace.

On arrival in Africa, Annan discussed Sudan with the Ethiopian Foreign Minister on 30th April, and with officials at the OAU on 2nd May (ibid.). Between these two discussions WFP officially released a renewed appeal for the emergency, which it had been preparing for several weeks (WFP 1998p; 1998l).[28] Very importantly, this launch

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[28] This appeal was not greatly different from the Consolidated Appeal in terms of quantity. Whereas the former had included a request for $58.8 to enable WFP to deliver 73,000MT for food between January

coincided with the announcement of USAID's first large pledge of resources to OLS agencies for relief of the humanitarian crisis: 6,500 tonnes of food (with transport costs) valued at $9.2 million to kick off the new WFP appeal, and $3 million for UNICEF operations in Sudan (Lupa-Lasaga 1998; USAID 1998b). The day after Annan's OAU discussions, a high-ranking UN humanitarian official arrived in Khartoum, and almost immediately reported the large increase in the number of aid transport planes licensed by GOS (Rosenthal 1998; UN 1998b; OCHA 1998b). Annan then (4th May) congratulated GOS on its concession, thanked its Foreign Minister personally, pronounced 'the humanitarian access issue now resolved' (Annan and others 1998), and appealed for $24.7m in food and cash to run relief operations in southern Sudan for the next four months (ibid.). It appeared that his prestige had enabled him to combine and articulate the forces generated among various international actors.

The arrangement announced by Kofi Annan provided GOS with clear backing from the international community for the IGAD peace process, to set against the military pressure exerted by the US through the Frontline States. It also ensured that large amounts of relief would be sent to Wau town, to re-stabilize a sizeable population of displaced people there. And GOS won the point of establishing El Obeid as an alternative air base to Lokichoggio, albeit on a temporary basis (WFP 1998o).

From this moment there was an energetic flow of donations to OLS. In contrast with the launch of the Consolidated Appeal, WFP's new appeal attracted $15m after only three weeks (WFP 1998e). Whereas on 4th May Kofi Annan complained that only 20 per cent of the Consolidated Appeal was covered by pledges (Cullen 1998) and USAID a week later reported that only 7 per cent had actually been sent (USAID 1998a), by the following month the proportion received by OLS had risen to 48 per cent (OLS 1998e). UN officials eventually were able to announce that the food airdrop was the largest in WFP's history (UN 1998a), with as many as 30 flights per day (USCR 1999). The further expansions of flight plans, although mostly presented in the aid community as resulting from new concessions on the part of GOS, seem to have been granted almost

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and December 1998, the revised appeal asked for $65.8m to deliver 83,000MT between May 1998 and April 1999. The purpose of WFP's new appeal appears mainly to have been to package the appeal newly and differently, distancing it more from other projects within OLS.

automatically when the funding for additional planes had been mobilized and the contracts lined up (see Section 5.2.4 below).

3.4.5 US policy and the Eritrea-Ethiopia war

The big pledge by USAID to UN agencies on 30th April marked a turn in US policy. *Time*, in its major article on the famine indicated that the key moment in the US famine response had involved decision at the highest level: a meeting between President Bill Clinton, his National Security Advisor, and Secretaries of State and Defense '[a]s appalling pictures of the starving began stirring up humanitarian outrage' (Nelan and others 1998). This was the point at which media-driven public compassion had become great enough to outweigh the security agenda.

If Clinton's Entebbe meeting on 25th March had indeed been 'intended to prepare for war' on Sudan (Strizek 2004), the plan was soon rendered unworkable by mounting concern about the famine. Within a week, the Italian chair of the IGAD Partners' Forum had done the deal with GOS to help it get an SPLA ceasefire in exchange for increased humanitarian access. The diplomatic processes for peace and access were underway, now fuelled by escalating media interest in the famine. The Frontline States of Eritrea, Ethiopia and Uganda, as members of IGAD, would not want to be caught accelerating their assistance to the SPLA while this was going on, with Kofi Annan preparing to visit them.

In writings about the Frontline States strategy, the standard explanation for its failure to produce decisive military action against GOS is that it was torn apart by the outbreak in early May of a different war: one between Eritrea and Ethiopia (de Waal 2003; Strizek 2004; Cockett 2010 p. 145). The present research on the Sudan famine suggests that these events could be understood the other way round: rather than the Eritrea-Ethiopia war causing the end of the Frontline States strategy, the stifling of the Frontline States strategy led to the Eritrea-Ethiopia war. The suddenness of the falling-out between Eritrea and Ethiopia has been a cause of puzzlement among observers.[29] But, whatever

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[29] Hostilities escalated rapidly from a border skirmish on 6th May. A Clinton administration insider later admitted that the US Government was caught completely by surprise (Prendergast 2001).

the tensions that had developed between the two governments, it is easy to imagine that they were repressed partly because of a perceived need to maintain a united front against the jihadist threat from GOS in the mid-1990s. The resuscitation of the IGAD peace process in 1997 was a result of Frontline States militarism but also posed great problems for it, because it put Eritrea, Ethiopia and Uganda in the roles of official peace-sponsors at the same time as being combatants. Engagement of rich liberal states with the IGAD peace process made this situation even more uncomfortable. And when the impending famine intensified this engagement – ultimately changing the priorities even of the US – the military alliance between Eritrea and Ethiopia became almost redundant. This doubtless helped their pent-up mutual animosities to come more easily into play.

As this latter war began to take hold, the US government took its place as the leader of the anti-famine effort.

> On May 10, the USG expressed appreciation for the approval for additional aircraft for OLS, but urged the GOS not to use the crisis as an opportunity to advance political goals. The USG asked other donors to associate themselves with the demarche and requested additional financial assistance to cover OLS needs. (USAID 1998c)

3.4.6 Options of sanctions, aid suspension and aid without OLS

So what more could have been done by actors in the international community to overcome the flight restrictions and their effects? We now consider three options which involved punishment or pressure on GOS: diplomatic and commercial sanctions; humanitarian suspension in the Northern Sector; and access in defiance of GOS sovereignty.

The US and its allies had several times in recent years used diplomatic and commercial sanctions to try to change GOS behaviour. Following Sudan's suspected involvement in the assassination of the President of Egypt in 1995, UN Security Council Resolution 1054 (26th April 1996) had requested UN member states to reduce official contacts with the Government, and instructed international organizations not to hold conferences in Sudan (Conroy and others 2000 pp. 121-126). Sudan had responded the following month by removing at least forty foreign Islamists, including Osama bin Laden,

although it claimed it could not locate the suspected assassins (Niblock 2001 pp. 211-214). The US had not been satisfied and in August 1996 had persuaded the Security Council to pass Resolution 1070, calling for a world embargo on Sudanese aircraft. Many of the UN member states and organizations failed to implement this, however, and the US had abandoned its pursuit of multilateral sanctions. Even the unilateral trade and economic sanctions later announced in President Clinton's Executive Order 13067 (3rd November 1997) had needed to be modified to accommodate certain domestic commercial interests (Niblock 2001; Hoile 2002), a fact which undermined the credibility of US moralism in the matter. Consequently in early 1998 there was little prospect of being able to impose sanctions of the kind of strength needed to achieve a clear outcome – such as the lifting of humanitarian access restrictions – in a short time-frame.

It is easier to imagine effective remedial action being taken through the relief operation itself. One option was some type of humanitarian suspension. This would have involved a reduction of work by the UN and other OLS agencies in some or all GOS-held areas, until new understandings were reached on access and other conditions. Such a strategy had been tried and threatened several times in previous years against the rebel authorities in the Southern Sector (African Rights 1995a pp. 18-20). But the effectiveness of such stoppages was, and usually is, limited by the fact that those whose actions are protested against are never identical with those who suffer most from the embargo, and often it is doubtful whether it hurts them at all (African Rights 1995a pp. 48-50; Leader and Macrae 2000). At the same time, a boycott leaves the participating agencies vulnerable to the charge that their motivation is not single-mindedly a compassionate impulse to relieve suffering. A disciplined individual agency such as ICRC may be able to defend against this by showing that it uses consistent criteria to safeguard its integrity (African Rights 1994 p. 5). But for multi-agency operations it is difficult to maintain a resolute and united front, except in very specific locations.

The UN may have been attempting a punitive go-slow with regard to Wau between February and April 1998. Officially it maintained that the reason for its inaction was a lack of needy people in the town. But for many in the international community it would have been extremely distasteful to resume aid there energetically after the atrocities and lootings, and amid acute flight restrictions to other locations. Toward the end of April

Sudan's Foreign Minister publicly pointed out that three weeks had passed since his access agreement with the Italian minister, and international aid organizations were still only talking about a famine (Sudan News Agency quoted in Sudan Update 1998a). He wondered if the donors' motive was not to supply food but ""to give the outlaws movement an opportunity to reorganize itself under the pretext of food delivery"" (ibid.). OCHA – or at least one of its senior staff – did advocate a broader suspension of OLS, but this was opposed by the consortium's NGO members (Dolan 1998 pp. 372-3). Such a move would certainly have been seized on by GOS as confirmation of its charges that the international agencies had impure motives, and it might have provoked it to abrogate OLS decisively.

The abrogation of OLS, and its possible replacement by a non-UN consortium, had been discussed by international aid officials from time to time in the foregoing years (Brusset 2000 pp. 146-147), and can be considered as a third option for dealing with the flight restrictions. Such calls were reiterated strongly by some in 1998 (Dowden 1998; ECHO 1998 p. 15; Bowden 1998). Donors were already contributing support to the 14 or so NGOs working in southern Sudan outside the framework of OLS (Buchanan-Smith and others 1999). USAID was, by August, providing about one third of its aid through such channels (Atwood 1998). In early 1998 it had been hoping to be able to deliver the bulk of its crisis assistance in that way but found that NGOs, as opposed to WFP, lacked the ability greatly to increase their volumes of delivery (Interview 2005f; Atwood 1998). Even then, such illegal activity had been partly parasitic on OLS, whose existence made it harder for GOS to pinpoint the rogue operators.

Removing the OLS umbrella altogether would probably not have stopped aid agencies from working in the area. It would, however, have left the relief agencies in the rural parts of southern Sudan much more dependent on the military protection of the SPLA, and less able than ever to prevent aid from being diverted to assist the insurgency directly, unless a strong effort were made at the same time to prevent this. The ideal scenario for the humanitarian hawks would have been the gaining of a mandate in the UN Security Council for a form of humanitarian safe-area in southern Sudan. But it is hard to see how a strong logistical operation could have existed without special military protection, or how such a thing could have been organized quickly enough, even if it

had been politically feasible. Non-OLS aid was certainly a threat to GOS, but the threat had already been pushed about as far as it could profitably go.

3.4.7 The option of readier aid

A readier provision of compassionate aid through OLS might also be considered as one of the options that existed for dealing with the flight restrictions. It was not an obvious response to the impulse to put 'pressure' on GOS. But the present chapter has already shown – contrary to the hawkish narrative – that the flight restrictions were not simply an external obstruction to a normal aid process. Rather they were already bound up with the aid process; and it is hardly going too far to say that the international community was already partly complicit in the flight restrictions.

This presents a difficulty in imagining the kind of actor for whom the readier provision of compassionate aid might have been an option. The US government does not easily fit the role, as the above argument has suggested that withholding aid from OLS was an intrinsic part of its strategy up to the end of April. But the imagining of the counterfactual can usefully go further. What if USAID had enjoyed a stronger humanitarian mandate and culture, and had been more independent from the State Department, Defence Department and White House? Such a thought was possible in 2000 when an Interagency Review of US Government Civilian Humanitarian and Transition Programs in admitted: 'The humanitarian voice in Senior USG policy-making has often been absent at critical moments, such that the humanitarian implications of political-military choices in crisis situations do not receive adequate consideration' (quoted in Helton 2002 p. 239). Aside from that, what about the Europeans? European states were evidently on the whole keener to push the IGAD peace process than the Frontline States strategy. There is enough sense of room to manoeuvre (Schaffer 1984) here to pursue the counterfactual.

Early and generous donation to UN agencies for famine response would have improved OLS's bargaining-position on humanitarian access. If the UN had been able to present GOS with a realistic prospect of developing a vigorous and well-backed humanitarian operation between February and April, it would have been attractive to GOS because it would have gone a long way to protecting GOS from the military activities of the SPLA

and its allies. Major attacks on GOS would then have been attacks on the famine relief effort in the eyes of international public and diplomatic opinion.

It may be objected that this use of aid would not have been neutral or impartial. However, it should now be clear that neutrality and impartiality in OLS were only ever relative aspirations and convenient half-truths, and this was part of the fundamental condition of the whole OLS setup. Overcoming flight restrictions through an early and copious pledging of aid would have been no less neutral and impartial than the dealing that Annan eventually crystallized. More to the point would be another objection: that in cooperating with GOS objectives, this strategy would have been politically and morally repugnant. But it is unclear that the political result would have been very different from what actually happened, while there is good reason to think that many thousands of lives could have been saved.

Even if an earlier commitment of relief resources produced no beneficial effect on access negotiations, it could at least have enabled fuller use of the permissions that did exist, and the building-up of humanitarian surge capacity. The OLS Review in 1996 had noted that shortage of funds was exacerbating the effects of access denials, due to the difficulty of making large transport contracts (Karim and others 1996 p. 246). It is true that in 1998 without preparedness measures in place (see Section 2.6) there was little that emergency donor funding could have done to provide relief to the displaced people from Wau during the crucial three-week period of the blanket flight ban. And it is doubtful whether an increased volume of physical relief delivery would have been beneficial before the end of March given the limitation on permitted destinations in Bahr al-Ghazal. But if donors had made a strong financial commitment during that period it would have saved much time in helping WFP and the other agencies prime the relief pipeline, line up transport contracts, hire and train additional staff, and prepare the organizational procedures for the point at which the restrictions were lifted. It might also have facilitated the process of obtaining flight permits. Such emergency funding from February to April would not have been enough to avert the famine, but it could substantially have mitigated it.

3.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter started by asking whether lateness of adequate relief in the famine was attributable to lateness of disbursals by governmental aid donors. It has focussed on income and outputs of WFP rather than other relief agencies due mainly to the difficulty of getting comparable time-sensitive data in other significant cases, but also because of the centrality of WFP food in the relief effort. After analysing the timing of the donations, and relating them to logistical factors – and especially the complex politics of restrictions on humanitarian flights – the chapter culminated in a counter-factual scenario which strongly suggested that earlier donations would have saved many lives. In addition the chapter has confirmed the importance of the preparedness measures discussed at the end of Chapter 2, and hence the relevance of the failure to fund them.

However, some difficulty has been experienced in treating 'lateness of donations' as an independent cause and 'governmental aid donors' as a meaningful actor. The lateness of donations in 1998 was evidently related to a longer-term pattern of under-funding of OLS, and a pattern of hostility towards GOS, particularly in the US Government. GOS restrictions on humanitarian access were related to the entrenched characteristics of OLS and to the threat posed by US-backed aggression. These considerations do not invalidate the conclusion that earlier donations would have saved lives, but they do provide a reminder of the relevance of richer context.

Another matter of uncertainty at the margins of the question is the role of diplomacy. The chapter has described an intricate diplomatic process for removal of the flight restrictions, and described it in enough detail to animate the concept of the 'international community'. The process reached its apex in the first days of May 1998 with the visit to Africa of the UN Secretary-General. It is unclear how fundamentally important the coincidence of that trip was to the finalizing of an access agreement. Might the trip have occurred earlier if humanitarian relief had been an urgent concern of the international community in February? Or could the diplomatic brokerage have emerged quicker in a different form? It is possible that the finalization of the access agreement was delayed throughout April partly because actors were waiting for the set-piece of the Annan visit. However it seems unlikely that the vagaries of diplomatic machinery could account for a delay of more than a month.

The hawkish narrative provided one of main defences of the governmental donors against charges of culpable parsimony and delay. It supplied the basis afterwards for anodyne official accounts of what happened (e.g. Bond and others 1999 pp. 46-49). The other main defence was ignorance. Could the donors reasonably have been expected to realize the urgency of the case in February 1998? This question is the starting-point for the next two chapters.

4 INFORMATION AND ACTION (1): EFFECTS OF INSTITUTIONAL SETTING

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The last two chapters of this thesis have concluded respectively that many lives could have been saved by an earlier relief intervention in Bahr al-Ghazal in 1998, and that a necessary precondition for this would have been earlier transfers of aid funds from major governmental donors. In order to judge whether this constitutes a failure of the donor states, it is necessary to consider whether lateness of donation was caused by inadequacy of information about the impending crisis. This is the topic of the next two chapters.

There has been a tendency among commentators toward polar decisiveness on the question of whether the famine was adequately flagged up in advance. Thus while a study for DANIDA (the Danish governmental aid department) asserted that warning was given and that 'the predictions proved largely accurate' (Buchanan-Smith and others 1999 Section 14.3), in the view of other food security academics the lateness of relief was 'due to a failure of donors' information systems to predict the crisis' (Devereux 2001a, summarizing Deng 1999). These statements may each, in their respective argumentative contexts, provide a moral or technical focus for making useful points. But their clashing also suggests that there is a deeper story to be told. These next two chapters will argue that, at the heart of the disagreement are different visions of the character and role of information systems for warning and needs-assessment. The belief that the systems failed is based on an idealized rationalistic model of the way they should work.

There was much enthusiasm for the development of early warning systems in the 1970s and 1980s. In keeping with this, USAID's evaluation of the US response to the African famine in the mid-1980s stressed that, before government and donors could be expected to act decisively, it was essential to have adequate and accurate information which

would enable effective targeting (Shaw and Clay 1993 pp. 229-230). Yet in the more recent literature of famine response there is a thread of belief that the problem is usually not so much one of available information in itself, as of the institutional context and links which connect this information with potential donor action (Cutler 1987; 1993; Kent 1987 pp. 131-140; Desai 1990 p. 218; Buchanan-Smith and Davies 1995; Twigg 2004 pp. 299-317). The metaphor of a trigger is often used (e.g. Buchanan-Smith and Davies 1995 p. 1; Darcy and Hofmann 2003 pp. 58-60), implying a normative vision in which a sufficiently firm application of fact within a rigid institutional sub-system should release pent-up energy and produce a result. But although this may be attractive as a model of the way things *should* work, it is not an accurate picture of the way disaster responses are actually formed.

The present chapter assembles a more complete and detailed account than exists in the published literature about the warning information that was widely available between October 1997 and April 1998. It also adduces criticisms that have been made – most articulately by Luka Biong Deng (1999) and Paul Howe (2003) – of the form and content of this information. In one way these criticisms are too sophisticated; on a commonsense view it is hard to imagine how an attentive consumer of the warning information could, by February 1998, be left without the impression that there was a high risk of a dreadful calamity, and an acute shortage of relief resources with which to combat it. In another way, it will be argued, the criticisms are not sophisticated enough. While they are to a large extent correct in identifying hesitations, inaccuracies, contradictions and gaps within the information, they go too far in taking these to explain the slow donor response. Moreover, they attribute too much autonomy to the producers of the information, imputing errors to faulty technique and individual failings rather than paying attention to the shaping influence of the institutions through which the information was created and transmitted. The critics thus work within a discourse that upholds an alliance between bureaucracy and expertise and obscures a deeper political bias.

The chapter finishes by showing how the characteristics of the cluster of institutions framing the early warning and needs assessment process conditioned the production and transmission of information. It considers the working of the Global Information and Early Warning System (GIEWS), the Famine Early Warning System (FEWS), the UN's

Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) and the interaction of all of these with OLS. It shows that the use of the CAP as the vehicle for recurrent budgeting within a long-lasting humanitarian regime brought about a collapse of the classical distinction between early warning and needs assessment and deadened the sensitivity of the whole relief system – even GIEWS and FEWS – to the occurrence of exceptional events. Yet the alternative paradigm to humanitarian action as crisis response – humanitarian action as sustainable disaster governance or stable management of a risky situation – did not work either, because the funding channelled through the CAP was chronically inadequate.

4.2 INSTITUTIONAL SETTINGS: GIEWS, FEWS, OLS AND CAP

The international institutions with the clearest standing mandates for producing famine early warning information were GIEWS and FEWS. GIEWS had been set up under FAO (the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization) after global food crisis of the early 1970s (Cutler 1987) and the 1974 World Food Conference (ODI 1997). It had helped greatly in prompting international food interventions to help poor countries avoid famines in peacetime (ODI 1997), but was less well suited to the volatile conditions of war. Its central procedure of aggregate food balance sheet analysis usually depended on official state channels of data-collection, and was relevant when food could be distributed by markets or public action. In civil war these things were problematic. Nevertheless, under GIEWS, FAO with WFP organised annual national crop and food supply assessment missions (CFSAMs). A CFSAM was done for the whole of Sudan at the end of 1997 (FAO and WFP 1997). FEWS, on the other hand, was created by USAID in the mid-1980s, amid a renewed surge of widespread interest in the potential of early warning systems. By 1997, FEWS was producing a monthly bulletin on southern Sudan, as it did for other places worldwide.

The surge of interest in early warning systems in the mid-1980s had been brought about by a combination of three factors: the scandal of the 1984-5 famines in the Horn of Africa and the propensity of live television coverage to turn this into public campaigns (Buchanan-Smith and Davies 1995 p. 1), the opening-up of the field of famine research and theorising following pioneering work by Amartya Sen (Sen 1981; Desai 1990 p. 217), and the opportunities afforded by increasingly-accessible satellite remote-sensory

data and computerised information management (Walsh 1986; 1988). Satellite data was best for estimating the general geographical availability of food, but Sen's work in contrast emphasised the importance of individuals' economic ability to obtain it. In analysing the latter, Sen treated famines mainly in a peacetime context. The task of collecting the necessary social information about entitlements and risks was much more problematic amid wars. However sophisticated the technology was for storing, collating and interpreting data at the centre, much of that information first needed to be created by investigative processes in rather chaotic field environments, and this proved a severe limitation on the applicability or usefulness of early warning systems (Torry 1988; Walsh 1988; Campbell 1990; Maxwell and Watkins 2003). By 1998 neither GIEWS nor FEWS had developed a direct and systematic way for tackling this problem. In southern Sudan both drew on data derived from a variety of methods and organizations in making their periodic reports. Both relied to a great extent on institutions established under OLS.

Several needs-assessment approaches were used within OLS over the years, often co-existing and even competing with each other (Karim and others 1996 pp. 112-114). In 1994 the WFP office for the Southern Sector of OLS adopted an emerging set of techniques called the Food Economy Approach (FEA) for its assessments, eventually setting up a Food Economy Analysis Unit (FEAU). FEA had been developed by the UK branch of the Save the Children Fund (SCF) in response to a request from FAO/GIEWS for methodologies 'dealing with food access as opposed to food supply' (Boudreau and Coutts 2002 p. 5). It drew on the food entitlement ideas of Sen and the rapid rural appraisal tools that had been reflectively disseminated in the work of Robert Chambers (Chambers 1981; 1992). The methods and the history of the FEA in this period are discussed further in Sections 5.2.1 and 5.3 below. Meanwhile here it is sufficient to note that by 1998 FEA dominated the food needs assessment process in rebel-held areas of Sudan, while UNICEF and several of the NGOs in the Southern Sector also used more-or-less systematic methods of their own for monitoring food security and related matters. WFP-OLS in the Northern Sector (including Wau and other GOS garrison towns in Bahr al-Ghazal) adopted some elements of the FEA in 1997/8, but it was a newer phenomenon there, and the commitment to it was smaller than in the Southern Sector.

The field assessment institutions under OLS were not exclusively dedicated to the purpose of early warning. Although their activities always carried the potential to identify new problems which might develop into major crises, the paradigm under which they worked is more recognisably one of continuous management. That is to say it was mostly concerned with determining marginal variations and priorities within a fairly stable ongoing routine. WFP's field staff in the Southern Sector of OLS worked throughout the year visiting field locations[30]: first to assess whether a relief food intervention was warranted and if so how large it should be[31], second to plan and monitor the distribution, and thirdly (often) to conduct post-distribution monitoring. Many of the same individuals functioned both as assessors and monitors. The overall quantities of available resources appeared to be determined through an annual process of needs assessment over all the parts of Sudan in which UN relief agencies were active. This Annual Needs Assessment (ANA), which was normally conducted after the main harvesting period and before the end of the calendar year, would make the foundation for a Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal on Sudan (hereafter 'Consolidated Appeal') to donor governments. The latter fell under the general UN procedure of the Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP).

The CAP had been set up in the early 1990s in order to improve responses to large humanitarian emergencies by coordinating them under auspices of the UN. The UN's Department for Humanitarian Affairs – soon superseded by OCHA – was made a focal point for drawing up a costed list of emergency activities to be carried out by the concerned UN agencies, sometimes involving some NGOs. Donors were urged to relate their donations to this appeal. The CAP was initially conceived as an instrument of quick reaction. As mandated by the General Assembly in December 1991 (UN 1991 Annex Paragraphs 31-32) a Consolidated Appeal was to be issued in the event of a

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[30] The boundaries of each 'location' were rather hard to specify. Usually they were identified by the name of a village with an associated airstrip. In effect what the aid-workers expected to cover was the population that could be served with relief delivered at that airstrip and not served more easily from a neighbouring airstrip. These things might depend on the jurisdiction of resident officials of the rebel movement and the chiefs with which they had relations.

[31] Recommendations on relief provision were usually given, whether the visit was labelled as a baseline assessment, an emergency assessment (responding to an unexpected event), a monitoring report (part of a planned pattern of tracking), or part of the annual (post-harvest) survey (OLS n.d. [c. 1994]).

sudden emergency, 'within the shortest possible time and in any event not longer than one week'. This was early in the post-Cold War era, before the phenomenon of the chronic and complex political emergency was a commonplace concept. As it turned out, soon the majority of Consolidated Appeals were renewals of previous ones (see Table 2 below). The CAP thus became a framework for indefinitely-prolonged administration of basic welfare delivery throughout large swathes of territory. The annual processes of assessment and appeal often stretched to span many months.

Table 2: Numbers of Consolidated Appeals and follow-ons, 1992-1998

Year	Number of Consolidated Appeals	Of which, number of follow-ons
1992	6	-
1993	21	9*
1994	14	11
1995	13	9
1996	14	11
1997	11	9
1998	15	9

* This figure includes 1993 Consolidated Appeals that followed on from separate components of the 1992 Appeals for the Drought Emergency Southern Africa (DESA) and the Special Emergency Programme for the Horn of Africa (SEPHA)

Compiled from data in Porter (2002 pp. 74-76)

For Sudan in 1998, the GIEWS and FEWS reports, as well as the ANA report (which emerged in several versions between October and December 1997) and the Consolidated Appeal document (published on 18th February 1998) all relied largely on the work of the FEAU. FEAU's output was blended with information from other sources in different combinations in the various reports. Thus the ANA report and consequently the Consolidated Appeal document additionally used information from WFP in the Northern Sector about Wau and the other government-held towns, and doubtless cross-checked the WFP (Northern and Southern) findings with data collected by UNICEF and other agencies. The GIEWS CFSAM published at the end of December, used much of the ANA material although giving more attention to the measurement of aggregate food production and the analysis of market prices. Its authors

had shared much of the ANA analysis while it was being prepared for the Consolidated Appeal. The FEWS bulletins incorporated points from the ANA and the GIEWS reports both before and after their official publication, supplementing this with a regular summary of rainfall, and with other pieces of information. The latter were mostly unreferenced, submerged in a composite view arrived at by the authors after consideration of material from a variety of formal and informal sources (Howe 2003 p. 115; FEWS 1997a; 1997b; 1997c; 1998a; 1998b).

4.3 WARNINGS OF THE CRISIS

Distinct warnings of the impending crisis are discernible in the output of these institutions as early as October 1997. The following section describes how the sequence unfolded from then until the formal launch of the Consolidated Appeal in February 1998. A separate sub-section traces the evolution of mass media coverage, from March, when several aid agencies determinedly began seeking attention from a public audience beyond the donors, to May, when this coverage became frenzied.

4.3.1 The aid community phase (October 1997 to February 1998)

On 7th October 1997 – the day when field research finished for the ANA (WFP 1997b) – the OLS monthly briefing in Nairobi warned: 'Northern Bahr el Ghazal and pockets of Western and Eastern Equatoria will face food security problems in 1998' (quoted in Wells and others 1998a Paragraph 10). On a literal reading, this was nothing new, but it correctly highlighted the geographical area of greatest concern. On 17th October, the WFP global emergency circular stated that the ANA showed higher food aid requirements than in previous years, and this was partly reflected in a tripling of the estimated needs for November-December 1997 against the deliveries for the same period in 1996 (WFP 1997c). The global bulletin of USAID's Famine Early Warning System (FEWS) issued on 27th October reported that the ANA would show 'the dry spell during the growing season [had] significantly reduced crop yields across southern Sudan', and it singled out northern Bahr al-Ghazal as particularly worrying in being affected by both drought and civil insecurity (FEWS 1997a). Representatives of major donors, invited to a session of the UNICEF/OLS planning retreat in a Nairobi hotel on 30th October, were told: 'It is clear that in 1998 drought and war will combine to create

massive humanitarian suffering' and that OLS, having suffered from 'drastic reduction in funding levels', lacked the necessary resources to tackle it (Task Force 1998 Annex 3). A report on the ANA issued in mid-November warned that the effects of conflict and drought in Bahr al-Ghazal were 'likely to result in the same desperate conditions that sparked the formation of OLS in 1989' (FEAU 1997). This phrase was subsequently incorporated in the Global Plan for Sudan in 1998-1999 produced by the European Community Humanitarian Office in early February 1998 (ECHO 1998 p. 6). The revised version of the ANA report (OLS 1997c), dated 6th December, put the proposition even more starkly in its Introduction:

> At this stage, the only way to prevent the onset of the scale of humanitarian disaster that spawned the creation of OLS in 1989 is to increase urgently the levels of relief assistance so that OLS is able to respond rapidly to life-threatening emergencies in southern Sudan. (p.6)

It identified Bahr al-Ghazal along with Equatoria as the most food insecure regions (p.6). In the ANA process 250,000 people were estimated as needing food aid in rebel-held areas of Bahr al-Ghazal (OLS 1998e p. 2; Wells and others 1998a).

These findings were largely confirmed in later and more formal documents. On 22nd December the GIEWS issued a special report on Sudan highlighting 'severe food deficits' in the South resulting from a crop production decline of 45 per cent which was 'due to dry weather and civil strife' (FAO and WFP 1997). Referring to more specific areas mainly in terms of the GOS federated states, it forecast that in Bahr al-Ghazal and Lakes States – along with Equatoria, parts of Jonglei and some areas on the North/South border – 'some 60 to 70 per cent of the population ... [would] need emergency food assistance for three to six months in 1998' (ibid.). It followed the ANA in likening the situation to what had happened a decade earlier.

The Consolidated Appeal for Sudan in 1998 (OCHA 1998a), issued on 18th February 1998, significantly softened the comparison, likening the situation not to 1988/9 but to 1994, a less dramatic year of hardship (p.1): a point made by Howe (2003 p. 116). Nevertheless it prominently reiterated the GIEWS figure of 45 per cent production decline in the South (ibid.). In its section on the three states of Bahr al-Ghazal it

projected a food deficit at the startling level of 50 to 60 per cent. Indicating OLS's planned response, the appeal document listed 'challenges' including the delivery of 'approximately 17,500 MT of relief food for 485,000 displaced and war-affected persons prior to the hunger gap period from April to July' and 'establish[ing] 'effective NGO services in Gogrial and surrounding areas in northern Bahr al-Ghazal' (OCHA 1998a pp. 12-13). Of the 485,000 people to be targeted in Bahr al-Ghazal, 352,700 were to be served through the Southern Sector of OLS (p.28).

Here it must be recalled that between the publication of the ANA and GIEWS reports on the one hand, and the Consolidated Appeal on the other, events occurred which greatly intensified the crisis in Bahr al-Ghazal, namely the fighting in Wau and displacement of the town's population in the final days of January. The Consolidated Appeal does not explicitly mention these. Its silence on this matter was not because it had escaped the attention of aid agencies. Between the Wau displacement and the launch of the Consolidated Appeal, various public statements were issued indicating that the crisis was now a severe threat. They included:

- an OLS statement on 2nd February, relayed by several UN agencies, that 100,000 people had been displaced, combined with a warning that OLS was 'deeply concerned about lack of resources to meet growing humanitarian crisis' (IRIN 1998b);
- reiteration of this in WFP's situation report on the same day, adding that new contributions to its Emergency Operation (EMOP) 5826 were urgently needed (WFP 1998a);
- a 5th February press release by the New Sudan Council of Churches, relayed by Action of Churches Together, which spoke of the unfolding of a 'major humanitarian disaster' (NSCC 1998a);
- a 6th February press release by the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Action (OCHA) warning of a 'potential tragedy' (UN 1998c); and
- a 10th February press release by the World Vision NGO saying that tragedy was 'looming' (World Vision 1998b).

Although the Consolidated Appeal does not explicitly mention the Wau events, it does seem surreptitiously to take them into account. It draws attention to projected 'major deficits…for the displaced camps around Wau and the rural areas of northern Bahr el

Ghazal'. The 352,700 projected beneficiaries in those parts of the region served through the Southern Sector of OLS was made up basically of the 250,000 identified in the ANA plus the 100,000 people thought to have been displaced from Wau (OLS 1998e; Task Force 1998 p. 10).

There are several possible reasons why this widely-recognised intensification of the crisis was not explicitly mentioned in the Consolidated Appeal. The Appeal could reasonably be considered an annual estimate rather than a response to sudden developments. It represented the joint position of various offices and agencies, including both the Northern and the Southern Sector in OLS. It was subject to a lengthy procedure of compilation, negotiation, drafting and approval, reflected in the fact that it appeared more than four months after the completion of the ANA fieldwork in the South. Nevertheless, the basis of its claim to objectivity was still the ANA. The incorporation at a late stage of emotive material with large implications would have further complicated and lengthened the process. In any case, precise additional data on the impact of the new events was very hard to obtain at this stage, due to the fighting in the area and the restrictions imposed by the Government of Sudan on OLS flights to Bahr al-Ghazal.

4.3.2 The mass media phase (March 1998 onwards)

Although this chapter and the next are mainly about the effectiveness of early warning and needs assessment information produced within the aid community, it is worth also considering the dynamics of mass media information, partly as an extension of this, and partly as a contrast to it. It is widely recognised in famine literature that mass media coverage can be more effective in spurring action, by making the question political rather than merely technical. The existence of an active and free press along with scope for open public debate within a country often seems to help prevent the development of famines by sensitizing governments to their threats (Drèze and Sen 1989 p. 19). There are famous and dramatic cases from the Cold War era in which journalists suddenly revealed mature famines to the outside world prompting big relief efforts – notably the broadcasts of Jonathan Dimbleby and Michael Buerk from Ethiopia in 1973 and 1984 respectively (Benthall 1993 p. 84) – but the usefulness of the international mass media for spurring assistance in natural disasters and complex emergencies is more doubtful

(de Waal 1996; Olsen and others 2003). The following brief account of journalistic coverage of the situation in Bahr al-Ghazal during the crucial months of 1998 shows how it was an integral part of the process which gradually led to humanitarian access and large volumes of relief, but on the whole not a pro-active driving force in this process.

For a month and a half after the exodus from Wau, little mass media attention was paid to the emerging humanitarian crisis, and what was paid was mostly pegged onto changes or complaints about the GOS flight restrictions (for instance AFP 1998c; 1998b). There was not much journalistic take-up of the alarmed statements made by agencies in the aftermath of the Wau exodus. (A great deal of media space was still occupied by the Monica Lewinsky scandal, which had broken in late January.) This helps explain the lack of donor interest at the time of the Consolidated Appeal launch. However in mid-March the most-worried agencies started making more use of the weapons of popular communication. Suitable subject-matter for this was now emerging in the form of large and accessible concentrations of desperate displaced people at Adet and, more especially, Pakor. These, it will be recalled, were two of the four rural locations permitted by GOS to receive relief flights from the end of February. (The other two – Ajiep and Akuem – suffered from militia attacks between February and April, and were found to be too insecure for steady relief.) The first on-location article about the impending famine in a major world newspaper (McKinley 1998) appeared in the New York Times on 18th March, and was based on a trip to Adet.

OCHA was one of the main movers in seeking media coverage. In mid-March it convened a meeting of OLS managers in Geneva to make a plan of action for the impending crisis (OLS 1998e). This involved tackling 'poor policy coordination' (ibid.) between the Northern and Southern Sectors. It meant agreeing a common stance on the urgency of the situation in the rebel-held areas of Bahr al-Ghazal. On the whole the Northern Sector management seems to have perceived less urgency than did their Southern Sector counterparts (OLS 1999b p. 21), and some among the former suspected the latter of exaggerating the crisis. Southern Sector staff in WFP later particularly remembered a Northern Sector colleague visiting the South apparently for the purpose of discovering that reports of impending famine were false (Howe 2003 pp. 121-122, 125-126; Interview 2005c). However, a joint press policy was agreed, evidently around

the formula that the conditions were of threatened – but not yet actual – famine. Such was the message projected by participants afterwards. WFP's press office in Geneva then briefed the BBC and other major news organizations that 350,000 people were at risk of starvation (AFP 1998a; Sudan Update 1998c; BBC 1998d). OCHA's own news bureau for eastern and central Africa sent a staff member to Pakor, partly to inform its regular output (IRIN 1998c) and partly to be able to brief other journalists in Nairobi. OLS released some disturbing video footage from Pakor to Reuters, but at the same time, its spokesperson told them it was 'premature' to speak of famine (Salinas 1998 p. 3).

Meanwhile several non-UN organizations were making their own press contacts. The humanitarian liaison office of the SPLM/A tried to interest journalists on the basis of a ten-page report it issued in March, warning that thousands would 'starve to death within the coming few weeks' (SRRA DMO 1998 p. 1). Some international agencies were trying to project much the same message. Among the most active in this regard were World Vision, Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rumbek. Spurred by aid agency video pictures at the feeding centre in Pakor, World Vision's press officer travelled to the site with the visiting head of its Canadian branch (Akol 2007). They shot some professional-quality footage and stills, which were used in a press conference called by World Vision in Nairobi on 23rd March (World Vision 1998a). This was reported by the Canadian Press Newswire next day (CPN 1998) and informed a BBC piece the day after that (BBC 1998c). The latter, which was much more substantial than the BBC's item of a few days previously, also cited alarms by NPA and Monsignior Caesar Mazzolari of Rumbek Diocese, as well as the ongoing UN warnings. The BBC's East Africa Correspondent, Martin Dawes, then visited Bahr al-Ghazal; his report appeared on *Despatches*, a UK television programme on 7th April (Dawes 1998b). CNN and Reuters followed with on-location reports on 10th April (Bond and others 1998) and 14th April (Dufka 1998) respectively. Pictures from the Reuters visit were syndicated widely. It has also been reported that more than thirty journalists were attracted to the famine zone in April as a result of a video film made by the SRRA and distributed through NPA (Howe 2007 p. 354).

The next step-change in the escalation of media coverage came on 24th April with an impassioned address about the emerging crisis on the BBC's UK early-evening news

programme by Bob Geldof (BBC 1998e; Donnelly 1998). Geldof's Band Aid and Live Aid initiatives had brought mass public mobilization to famines in the mid 1980s. Geldof's appearance made big news, and set an agenda for the British media with effects that rippled internationally. His message was that individuals could make a difference by creating political pressure. Although overtly he was referring to pressure for humanitarian access, his words certainly also created pressure for donor disbursements of aid. They spurred an immediate statement from the UK government about its stance (see Section 5.4.2).

The media now became well-supplied with political incidents on which to hang coverage of the humanitarian crisis. In Britain there were controversies about whether it was properly called a famine and whether there was a shortage of relief resources (again see Section 5.4.2 for further details). A diplomatic focus was being created in the trip to Africa by the UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan: a story which reached a climax on 4th May with the announcement of the breakthough access agreement (see Section 3.4.4). This was a green light for teams of high-profile journalists and camera crews to descend on Nairobi, Lokichoggio and Bahr al-Ghazal, where they frantically competed with each other and with aid agencies for still-scarce air transportation and for the attention of representatives of the afflicted population (Alagiah 1998b; 1998a; Gill 1998; Deng 1999 pp. 103-104).[32] The high level of coverage between May and August probably contributed to the rise in the rate of donor aid contributions from May to July, and an eventual large overshoot in responses to the Consolidated Appeal (Porter 2002 p. 76) and over-delivery of relief items to many locations (Macaskill 2000 p. 198).

4.3.3 Effects of the warnings

Comparing the timing of the aid community warnings with that of the aid donations (set out in Section 3.2 above), it appears that the former had little effect on the latter. Indeed, one major donor organization was able retrospectively to define what counted as a

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[32] This frenzy of activity began producing an abundance of on-site reporting in mid-May. On 11th May the *Guardian* columnist John Ryle had noted that UK media coverage of Sudan had dipped sharply in the previous week (Ryle 1998). This probably reflected the gap between a hard-news story and its follow-up: in this case the gap was measured in the time it needed for teams of journalists to travel to southern Sudan in the wake of Kofi Annan's access announcement.

warning on the basis of what the organization had responded to. The lesson-learning paper on USAID's website (Salinas 1998) states that WFP's 'first public appeal' came in a release on 21st April (p. 3). In view of the foregoing sections, it is hard to understand the reference to this date except in relation to the vainglorious claim that 'warnings of a serious disaster were being sent to Washington from USAID staff in the field as early as April': the timing being made to seem less inept by recording that 'the outbreak of famine [was] in July' (p. 4).

To sum up: the common perception that donors are more sensitive to mass media coverage, and that this depends very much on distressing pictures of human emaciation (Benthall 1993 pp. 177-186), seems to be borne out by the case of Bahr al-Ghazal in 1998. Horrific images began becoming available in March. The earlier ones sparked journalistic interest, leading by degrees to broader and more intensive media coverage. It was only after the looming famine became a high-ranked news item on major networks such as the BBC (as it did particularly with the help of Bob Geldof at the end of April) that the crucial surge of donor cash began.

This correlation might tempt one to see a simple causal relationship between media coverage and donations. One must also bear in mind the complex politics of relief access described in Chapter 3. These doubtless had some inertia and momentum of their own. Nevertheless, the early press reports of impending crisis may well have spurred the international diplomatic efforts during April, and the fast-growing news coverage at the end of that month probably gave substantial impetus to Kofi Annan's negotiations and the accomplishment of his access agreement, by pressurising all parties, not least the Sudan Government.

4.4 Criticisms of the Aid Community Warnings

From a casual reading of Section 4.3.1 it might seem obvious that there had been enough warning information by the time of the attack on Wau or the launch of the Consolidated Appeal to require a more urgent donor response than the one that eventually materialized. But such a view has been disputed by donors and others. Several donor representatives have indeed claimed or implied that they would have sent cash sooner if they had been better served by the institutions responsible for providing

advance warning and needs assessment for humanitarian crises (Salinas 1998; Short 1998b Para. 20; Macaskill 2000 p. 194; Howe 2003 pp. 114-115). This claim has, with various degrees of qualification, been endorsed by academics who have researched such matters (Deng 1999; Howe 2003 pp. 113-127). Other more cursory commentators have portrayed inadequacy of information as a major cause of the lateness of the famine response (Almquist 1999 pp. 11-12; Devereux 2001a p. 139). The critics attack both the presentational form and the substance of the warnings.

4.4.1 Presentation of the warnings

Staff of donor organizations have alleged that, without the benefit of hindsight, the most urgent warnings were not significantly different from the alarming statements made in previous years, or had not stood out clearly amid information about the food situation in other countries or other parts of Sudan in 1998 (ETC 1999 p. 43; Macaskill 2000 p. 194; Howe 2003 pp. 113-115; Interview 2005b). Leaving aside the publications of GIEWS, FEWS and others, and considering only the Consolidated Appeals, there was a formidable mass of material inviting comparative judgement in at least three dimensions: the diversity of the perceived needs in Sudan (the 1998 Appeal covered operations in eleven main regions of which Bahr al-Ghazal was only one), the recurrence of such needs (Sudan had been the subject of an Appeal every year since 1993) and the number of emergencies worldwide (there were 14 other Appeals in 1998). Paul Howe, in an unpublished doctoral thesis (Howe 2003 pp. 113-127) argues that the complaint of a lack of communicative clarity has significant validity and describes various ways in which he believes it had come about.

One set of problems, Howe considers, was posed by the plurality of the early warning systems and institutions, militating against 'a consistent forecast or clear understanding of the situation' (Howe 2003 p. 118). Deployment of different methodologies, and of assessments at different though overlapping times and places meant in his view that 'the analyses were not easily comparable' (ibid.). This might have been true in terms of primary research data. However, any donor who did not individually and meticulously interrogate the field researchers and their records but merely read the main circulated reports did not even have separate coherent analyses to look at. The primary data were not set out in the circulated reports comprehensively or systematically enough to show

how these had led to their key numeric and descriptive conclusions. Instead, the results of various mixtures of methodologies and assessments seem to have been synthesised behind the scenes in each publishing institution. Those results were then stated in the reports, and any of the antecedent primary data that was set out merely served illustrative, symbolic or cosmetic purposes. Thus Howe complains of 'innumerable numbers' in these documents, and suspects them of serving the purpose of 'padding out' (p. 116). As described in Section 4.2, there was a large amount of overlap in the research sources between the various reports, but the exact mixture in each case was unclear. The general problem, then, with the formal early warning publications was not so much that they reported incommensurable pieces of research, but that they presented ill-defined and ill-related blends of research and interpretation. This agglomeration probably reflected a realistic pattern of consensuses, uncertainties and leeway for interpretation within an epistemic community, but it was vulnerable to donor claims that they needed harder-edged findings.

Edge-softening is also found by Howe in stylistic tropes of the warning and assessment documents. Many of the most striking and unequivocal statements in them, according to him, are not authorial declarations but the reported words of others from which the authors have thus slightly distanced themselves. The example that Howe gives is the testimony of the ANA report that '[t]he people...are comparing [1997] to 1988' (OLS 1997c p. 87). His point is weakened by the fact that the authors turned this into the direct and prominent statement that relief was needed in order 'to prevent the onset of the scale of humanitarian disaster that spawned the creation of OLS in 1989' (op. cit. p.6).

Often, Howe observes, the authorial voice in such reports is numbingly repetitive. Quoting parts of the Executive Summaries of the Consolidated Appeal documents for 1997 and 1998, he remarks that similarity of vocabulary makes the latter seem 'less urgent and less unequivocal' than it otherwise might (Howe 2003 p. 116). The lines he chooses to illustrate this from the former document read:

> During 1996, the 13-year-old civil conflict continued to destabilize and further degrade the lives of millions of Sudanese civilians. War-affected populations throughout Sudan

> struggled to cope with the effects of chronic malnutrition and an alarming increase in the spread of infectious diseases. (DHA 1997 p. iii)

This he sets against the following from the 1998 appeal:

> During the next twelve months, large parts of the Sudan are expected to experience the worst humanitarian conditions since 1994 when similar conditions destroyed hundreds of Sudanese communities and put hundreds of thousands of Sudanese at risk. (OCHA 1998a p. 1)

The comparison is not a very neat one, as the first passage looks backwards and the second one forwards. It is hard to accept that the latter does not convey a more urgent warning. One can see what Howe is driving at about the language, although he does not analyse exactly what is similar in the two passages. Apart from the fact that they begin with the same word, the most striking echo is of 'millions of Sudanese citizens' by 'hundreds of Sudanese communities and...hundreds of thousands of Sudanese' The linguistic construction they share is one which calls for the awe of readers rather than contributing much to their knowledge; alarm pitched at this level is commonplace and monotonous. The documents do contain plenty of more particular information in subsequent pages, but Howe sees the mass of information as presenting a hazard too: 'In padding out its discussion with innumerable numbers, and diffusing the focus to several areas, the [Consolidated Appeal] is able to hedge its claims' (Howe 2003 p. 116). In also covering many other parts of Sudan, the Appeal in his opinion 'fails to clearly single out and differentiate the potential magnitude of the crisis in Bahr al-Ghazal' (ibid.).

Howe is especially interested in the potential impact of the word 'famine', authoritatively deployed. He holds that the lack of a firm prediction of 'famine' overriding the ambiguities discussed above in any of the aid-agency warnings helped make it possible for some donors to ignore the alarms (p. 114). The applicability of the word to the emergency became a matter of public controversy from March 1998; this is treated in more detail in Section 5.4 below. Howe's thesis can be seen on the whole as an attempted solution. It culminates in a proposed more objective and robust conceptual system for describing and measuring famine: an effort which later led to an influential

paper on famine scales (Howe and Devereux 2004) and thence fed into the Integrated Phase Classification system in which great hopes are currently invested (see Section 6.5.2).

4.4.2 Substance of the warnings

Complaints about the form of warnings tend in practice to be continuous with scepticism about the substance. Lack of communicative clarity may result from the fact that the basic information to be communicated is confusing or unreliable. Thus Howe's assertion that the broad focus and complexity of the Consolidated Appeal document served a 'hedging of claims' (Howe 2003 p. 116) implies that stakes of putative relief resources were placed in all areas because there was little confidence in an estimation of differential risks. The 'padding out' of the reports with illustrative rather than operative data, is suspected of obscuring or replacing an epistemological structure that the field agencies feared was controversial or otherwise insecure.

Worse than this: the idea that the sharing of research and opinion between the different agencies represented a complex but judicious interchange within an epistemic community is undermined by occasional instances in which facts and figures were evidently merely being plundered by one report for another, and used misleadingly out of context. An example is the statement in the Bahr al-Ghazal section of the Appeal that '[a] 50 - 60% food deficit is expected for the region' (OCHA 1998a p. 12). If this were literally the case, it would imply a need for a vastly greater quantity of relief than was actually being proposed.[33] The statement appears to have been copied from the 'Executive Summary' of the section in the ANA which dealt with only those parts of Bahr al-Ghazal accessible to the Northern Sector of OLS (OLS 1997c p. 54). The ANA report dealt separately with the Southern Sector (pp. 87-92), and no overall percentage food deficit was given there. Studies at various airstrip locations in the Southern Sector had found much smaller percentage deficits (see Table 5 on Page 150). The range of 50 to 60 percent specified in the Northern Sector's 'Executive Summary' seems itself to be

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[33] The 'challenge' of Bahr al-Ghazal in the Consolidated Appeal was to deliver 17,500MT to 485,000 people: an average quantity per person of 36kg. If comprising a balanced variety of foodstuffs, this would normally be taken to represent a full relief ration for a little over two months, or about 20% of annual requirements for these 485,000 people only, let alone the other inhabitants of the region.

a notably loose summary or extrapolation of more particular data in the detail of the document, where the statement is made: 'It is estimated that households in the Wau displaced camps will experience 60% food deficit; Aweil 20%, Ariath 40% and Bagari Village 20%' (p. 56). While there were probably more people in the Wau displaced camps than in the other mentioned places, it seems that crude clerical elision is what is making the condition of the camp population in the enclave of Wau town representative of the overall condition of the region. The extravagance of the claim coupled with its apparently fallacious derivation was liable to make donors feel more uncertain about the situation than they were before.

Howe suggests that the debasement of the currency of urgent language came about partly because the donors perceived alarms to be 'part of the "crying wolf" syndrome' (Howe 2003 p. 115), which is to say a propensity to raise false alarms in order to attract more resources in the short run but at the cost of causing unresponsiveness to genuine emergencies in the long run. This perception chimes with interviews conducted for the present research. A European Commission staff member who had been involved at the time, asked rhetorically: 'How many times have they raised dramatic appeals? Why was this different?' (Interview 2005b). Several years had passed in which, repeatedly, less food had been delivered to Bahr al-Ghazal than OLS had said was necessary, and yet there had been no obvious famine (Karim and others 1996 pp. 162-165; Deng 1999 p. 70). A food economy fieldworker related: 'Was there donor fatigue? Yes, there was. People kept saying "What are we paying for? Every year you say people are going to starve and we give you the food aid less than the need and people don't starve"' (Interview 2005c). Perhaps the assessment agencies had habitually underestimated the ability – famously illustrated in Alex de Waal's book *Famine that Kills* (de Waal 2005 [1989]), and highlighted using the case of Bahr al-Ghazal in the 1996 OLS Review (Karim and others 1996 pp. 160-165)[34] – of Africans to survive through coping-strategies such as the migration of some family members and the consumption of wild foods. If the alarm turned out to be correct this particular occasion, it might have been due to a kind of luck rather than to genuine knowledge.

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[34] However the review also followed Susanna Davies (Davies 1993) in warning against complacency on this account (Karim and others 1996 pp. 133-134).

However, most of the more detailed arguments about the inaccuracy of the warnings after the event did not say that they had exaggerated the needs, but that they had understated them. Several of the critics find evidence of understatement in the fact that the number of people deemed to require food aid rose sharply during the first half of 1998. Macaskill (2000 pp. 195-196) reports this as a current and credible view, presenting the sequence as follows.

Table 3: Increases in targeted population as presented by Macaskill

Month (1998)	Targeted population requiring food aid in Bahr al-Ghazal
February	250,000
March	350,000
April	380,000
May	595,000
June	701,000

Source: Macaskill (2000 p. 195).[35]

A major donor who had used this argument was Clare Short, the UK Secretary of State for International Development. When the famine hit the headlines and it was clear that relief was arriving too late, Short, having committed herself to the view that the problem was not a lack of donor resources, tried to show that the obstacles had lain elsewhere. In a session of the parliamentary International Development Committee (recorded in Wells and others 1998b) she contended that the figure of 350,000 vulnerable people, still officially being quoted by WFP in mid-May, had been too small (Short 1998b Paragraph 20). She backed up the assertion by observing that the figure was revised upwards soon afterwards, and strongly hinted that the revision was related to the field visit and expertise of her department's Relief and Rehabilitation Field Manager (ibid.). She offered the alleged underestimate as her main explanation of the insufficiency of relief delivery after the relaxing of the flight restrictions (Wells and others 1998b Oral Evidence Questions 6 and 31). 'It was not that donors were not

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[35] This tabulation reproduced here is misleadingly schematic in setting the different figures alongside successive months. As related in Section 4.3.1 the estimate of 250,000 vulnerable people was published in late 1997 and that of 350,000 was applicable from early February until mid-May. The figure of 380,000 does not seem to have been widely used in April, but was explained in mid-May as the number of people 'in critical need', within a group of 595,000 targeted for food aid (WFP 1998e).

willing to give money; it was that the official appeal was asking for too little' (Question 31).

Deng (1999) makes a similar point, arguing that the 1998 Consolidated Appeal understated the relief needs in Bahr al-Ghazal due to the faulty needs-assessment systems of international agencies, especially the FEA as used within WFP. He argues that the FEAU put too much reliance on people's special strategies for coping in times of stress, and particularly on increases in their consumption of wild foods (pp. 97-100). He appears to assume that the Consolidated Appeal figures were directly derived from FEAU and, as evidence that these figures were inaccurate, he points out that WFP and UNICEF issued expanded appeals in mid-1998, and that the monthly total of people counted as receiving aid in Bahr al-Ghazal increased almost fifteen-fold between January and August 1998. An efficient and effective relief operation would have delivered food at a steadier rate, and before the hunger gap period rather than after it. Deng thus contends that 'a reactive planning process emerged to address the crisis' (p.72) and attributes this to an initial failure to make a correct assessment. Moreover Deng argues (pp. 98-100) that this quantitative inaccuracy in the UN assessments amounted to a qualitative failure to sound the alarm. He compares Consolidated Appeal figures between times and regions to make the point that they did not show significantly more vulnerable people for Bahr al-Ghazal in 1998 compared either with Upper Nile in 1998 or with Bahr al-Ghazal in 1997.[36] They thus 'failed to predict in 1997 the deteriorating food security situation in 1998' (p.99). He holds that this representation 'greatly slowed the response of donors to the famine' (p. 100).

4.5 INCONCLUSIVENESS OF THE CRITICISMS, AND A FURTHER AGENDA

4.5.1 A commonsense humanist rebuttal

The above criticisms of the aid agency warnings do not immediately provide good explanations of – or excuses for – the lateness of donation. They do point to serious problems with the information, but this is not sufficient. Certain robust facts – a

[36] Deng points out that the figures given for vulnerable population in Bahr al-Ghazal (Southern Sector) fell from more than 700,000 in the 1997 Consolidated Appeal to 352,700 in the 1998 one. In the latter year, the comparable figure for Upper Nile (Southern Sector) was 323,500 (Deng 1999 p. 99).

population living under severe stress for many years, a particularly turbulent year with a poor harvest in 1997, and the sudden forced displacement of about 100,000 destitute people in this environment – had surely been set out credibly and prominently enough to tell any attentive observer at the end of January that there was a very strong risk of massive and imminent calamity.

It may be objected that this is an over-humanistic view. Facts that might be highly significant to an individual attentive observer are not necessarily amenable to responses by bureaucrats and politicians (Kent 1987 pp. 117-172). Bureaucrats are widely thought to have a preference for inaction, as it is usually less difficult to justify than any particular action (Buchanan-Smith and Davies 1995 pp. 46-47, 205-207). Bureaucratic systems may be seen as typically having evolved with a bias toward managing problems in a way that preserves the system, rather than solving them (Schaffer 1984; Cutler 1993). The kinds of confusions that have been noted in the presentation of the warnings – the multiple reports, overlaps, contradictions, inaccuracies, debased language and cavalier claims – might well make such conservatism easier to sustain. Put in a more active way: officials operating on the basis of such untidy material would be vulnerable to criticism and have reason to shun the risk involved. Consequently it may be fair and useful to lay some of the blame for the late aid response on the information, both its presentation and content.

However this kind of concession to bureaucratic mentality can easily be overdone. There is no empirically-robust theory about the decision-making in state donor bureaucracies. But there are several studies indicating that the outcomes of such processes are only weakly correlated with evidence of needs (Darcy and Hofmann 2003 p. 52) and positively correlated with other governmental concerns such as geopolitical considerations (Buchanan-Smith and Davies 1995 p. 9; Devereux 2000; Smillie and Minear 2003 pp. 7-10; Olsen and others 2003). It must also be borne in mind that famine warning information will never be altogether free of such defects, and that bureaucrats and politicians can always seize on them to justify inaction and provide cover for the working of contrary motives. It is reasonable to demand that decision-makers should exercise tolerance toward petty inconsistencies and uncertainties in the face of a bigger picture, and that a challenge be maintained against the adverse bureaucratic dynamics. Recognition that special bureaucratic dynamics are at work does

not mean that individual responsibility cannot find room to manoeuvre (Schaffer 1984), and indeed it is observed in the literature that the personal initiatives of independent-minded officials often prove crucial in disasters, along with their opportunities and skills for linking humanitarian concern with wider political and bureaucratic agendas (Kent 1987 pp. 125-131; Hall-Matthews 1998 p. 125; Darcy and Hofmann 2003 p. 52; Smillie and Minear 2003 pp. 12-13; Anderson and Choularton 2004; Darcy 2006). Criticism of information should not be pushed so far as to absolve donor staff – or indeed the rich world in general – from a duty of intelligent and active engagement.

4.5.2 Dangers in the alliance of bureaucracy and expertise

The criticisms of the warnings discussed in the previous section rely heavily, if implicitly, on a conventional model of the relationship between information and response in a bureaucratic environment, a model that follows the famous description and analysis of Max Weber (Weber 1947 [1922] pp. 329-341). Various bureaucratic techniques – such as rule-government, the separation of person and post, the making and filing of documentary records – create an orderly environment in which information can become a basis of action. The role of designated technical experts and canonical expertise is crucial here; they make information authoritative (p. 339). But it would be a mistake to consider this rationality as a pure or neutral quality. Knowledge may be a basis for action, but action is also a basis for knowledge. Michel Foucault (1989 [1966] pp. 93-108; 1991 [1968] pp. 66-70; 1980) has indicated how, beginning in Britain and France at the end of the eighteenth century, new intellectual disciplines – demography, statistics, political economy, aspects of medicine – marked the beginnings of a general epistemic shift. These disciplines were shaped by political conditions and developed alongside systems of administration that could use them in governance. The symbiotic relationship between expertise and bureaucracy – ways of public knowing and public acting – results in a channelling of practices in each. Bureaucratic government fosters intellectual disciplines by using them in particular ways, creating societal agendas around these uses, employing and funding their practitioners.

An important feature of this symbiosis between bureaucracy and expertise is the numerical representation of objects and states of affairs (Scott 1998b; Rose 2000 pp. 197-232). Quantification allows situations to be acted upon mathematically, for instance

in prioritising elements or making resource allocations proportionately. It has the bureaucratic advantage of presenting an appearance of objective evaluation and standardised procedure.

Experts and the very institution of expertise offer the bureaucrat various potential benefits beyond the publicly-avowed ones. These include what may briefly be listed as: spin, credentializing, scapegoating, skin-shedding and decoying.

- *Spin*. Experts know how to find the particular facts that will construe results in the most favourable way, and their jargon may be hard for outsiders to penetrate (Easterly 2002 pp. 231-232).
- *Credentializing*. Experts belong to structures of professionalism that can certify their competence – and, by extension, the competence of those who employ them – independently of how useful their work is to other stakeholders (Benveniste 1973 pp. 39-48).
- *Scapegoating*. If the external pressure of criticism is great, bureaucrats and politicians may absolve themselves by being seen to cast out faulty techniques and poor advice (Benveniste 1973 p. 44).
- *Skin-shedding*. A feature of expertise is that it is always developing internally, so that it can support claims that there is no need to replace personnel, policies and institutions which have produced poor results, because lessons are being learned and techniques improved (Easterly 2002 pp. 234-236). Hence an old generation of techniques belonging to a body of expertise is like the snake's skin that can be shed off.
- *Decoying*. The above functions of expertise, rather than its role as an actual guide to decision-making, may sometimes be its usefulness to the bureaucrat. Expertise might then be regarded as a decoy, drawing attention away from political motives that are harder to explain than procedures portrayed as objectively valid (Benveniste 1973 pp. 39-48).

It may be suspected that some of the above functions are at work in the criticisms of the warning information for Bahr al-Ghazal in 1998. The blame-shifting by the White House and USAID mentioned at the start of Section 3.4, in which they both claimed

they would have acted properly if they had been fed with the right information, reproduces the model of a straightforward relationship between knowledge and action in politico-bureaucratic decision-making. This is usually congenial for assessment experts too. For experts, criticism of other experts and their methods can be a way not only of vindicating themselves individually, but of helping to rehabilitate and reproduce the practice of expertise in general, and the system that it serves (Edkins 2000 especially p. 143).

In their attempts to hammer home arguments that the warnings of crisis in Bahr al-Ghazal in 1998 were defective, the critics cited in Section 4.4 tend to rely on conventional assumptions about the meaning of information, and the links between information and action. These assumptions are in many cases idealizations associated with a technocratic model of assessment and response. In this model, aid organizations make decisions about their courses of action on rational grounds, based on data produced by technical experts. There are many warnings in development studies literature about the fallacies and dangers associated with technocracy; particularly its tendency to ignore pervasive competition between the interests of various stakeholders, and other awkward facts that disrupt its big ideas. Among the most salient writings in this context are the challenges of Bernard Schaffer (1984) and Peter Cutler (1993) to the myth of the policy cycle in the bureaucracies of development and aid. Also instructive is Timothy Mitchell's presentation, in *Rule of Experts* (Mitchell 2002), of an idea of 'technopolitics', 'a certain way of organizing the amalgam of human and nonhuman, things and ideas, so that the human, the intellectual, the realm of intentions and ideas seems to come first and to control and organize the nonhuman' (pp. 42-43). The present thesis puts more emphasis on human agency and responsibility than does Mitchell's book; nonetheless it recognizes that one must refer to a realistic survey – rather than an idealized model – of institutions and technologies where action is shaped. It must not be assumed that these are streamlined to serve rational decision-making; rather they comprise uneven terrain which largely determines the routes that people take.

The next section shows how the characteristics of the CAP and other framing institutions influenced the form, content and significance of the famine warning information.

4.6 CAP, OLS, FEWS AND GIEWS: UNEVEN TERRAIN FOR INFORMATION AND RESPONSE

Howe and Deng, focussing respectively on the language and the numbers in the Consolidated Appeal as described in Section 4.4, complained that these things did not convey a clear famine warning. But it was rather out of place to expect that they would. The CAP was not set up as a famine warning mechanism, or even a needs assessment system, but rather a way of organising responses to emergencies that had already been identified (UN 1991 Annex Paras. 31-32). Given that Howe and Deng were interested in famine warning, why did they concentrate their scrutiny on the Consolidated Appeal rather than the outputs of FEWS and GIEWS and the ANA? The reason was probably that the Appeal's action orientation forced it to be more complete and explicit than these other documents. It incorporated information generated by the warning and assessment institutions, but it had a more definitive and specific text than the ANA outputs, it was more authoritative than the FEWS bulletins (which synthesised a variety of headline information), and it disaggregated the situation in Bahr al-Ghazal more clearly than the GIEWS report of December 1997. Yet, as the present section shows, several aspects of its role and form made it unsuited to the purpose of early warning. Not only this, but its institutional relationship with ANA, FEWS and GIEWS corrupted them for the purpose too.

The Consolidated Appeal was unsuited for famine early warning, firstly, because of its timetabling. Having become a vehicle for relief operations of an ongoing nature in Sudan, it was re-launched annually from 1993. The timing of the re-launch was a matter of scheduling months in advance, not in reaction to any new event on the ground. This is not to say that the scheduled deadline was always met. The preferred timing for the presentation of such Appeals was in November (Porter 2002 p. 53), but when this was delayed for administrative or political reasons – as in the case of Sudan in 1998 – the New Year holiday period meant that the delay could stretch until February, by which time the needs assessment data was no longer fresh, and the time available for response before the rainy season was very short.

A second factor was spatial. In Sudan the Consolidated Appeals gave the impression of referring to an ongoing programme of apparently-comprehensive coverage over a broad

geographical region: the whole of southern Sudan and some neighbouring areas of the North. This comprehensive coverage was to be not just of surveillance but of planned action. The Appeal referred directly to plans rather than to humanitarian needs.[37] The plans were subject to political pressures tending toward geographical balance of aid, not only between Northern Sector and Southern Sector, but also between sub-domains of local authority. It was important to OLS to maintain a presence in as many areas as possible – or at least an institutional familiarity with them sustained by frequent visits – in order to monitor the situation. But this necessitated maintaining at least a basic level of assistance in each area, as relationships with local populations and authorities tend to become strained when aid-workers are present in a locality – or visit frequently – without delivering some aid (Jok 1996). Anyway, it was easy to find prima facie cases for aid. Moreover, the effective working of most projects in such an environment requires investment in a reliable base of capital assets that are hard to move in the short term. These may be physical – buildings and vehicles – but also include less tangible things like the local knowledge of staff and their relationships with other nearby institutions.

The premium on spatial evenness was even more apparent in the presented plan than in the delivered assistance, since subsequent failures to deliver could always be blamed on unplannable contingencies: lack of resources at the right time, emergencies elsewhere and so forth. Plans often made the caveat that they were subject to alteration as events unfolded; the needs were to be 'periodically reassessed' as the 1998 Consolidated Appeal put it (OCHA 1998a p. 1). Given that the plan was an annual one, this was only sensible, and it would have been reasonable for a reader to assume that an unforeseen major catastrophe in one particular place could be responded to initially by drawing on resources that had been appropriated with reference to a wider range of locations. It was therefore less important for the Consolidated Appeal to pinpoint each sub-emergency, than to indicate the overall scale of resources likely to be required, by using an

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[37] The 1994 guidelines for the CAP worldwide (IASC 1994) drew a distinction between 'estimates of emergency requirements' serving as 'background information', and the contents of the appeal, which had to meet criteria of being within the demonstrable delivery capacity of the agencies concerned. Thus while the 1998 Sudan Appeal (OCHA 1998a) states that the priority was to meet the most urgent needs which had been identified during the ANA and the GIEWS mission, its hard data was in terms of deliverables rather than measurements of need. This is set out in more detail in Chapter 5.

illustrative breakdown of intended benefits and their costs. This way of using figures is different from what Deng assumes when he compares the Appeal's plan for Bahr al-Ghazal with that for Upper Nile in order to argue that poor assessment methods caused late donations. It also reduces the relevance of Howe's comments about the tired phrasing used in the Appeal. In this kind of document there is less need than there would be in a simple early warning, to make a psychological impact in favour of a particular location. What Howe identifies as a 'hedging' of the claims of all the different regions, was not only a sign of uncertainty about the exact needs in the year ahead, but also a potentially constructive way of coping with this uncertainty, by spreading the risks associated with various items in an overall budget.

While these considerations mean it is unsafe to read the Consolidated Appeal as a medium of early warning, this is not to say that it functioned well as an instrument of continuous rational management. From their inception up to 1998 and beyond, donor contributions to Consolidated Appeals worldwide were usually late, unpredictable, and in the end far from sufficient to cover the requests. The average funding level of CAPs worldwide reached 80 per cent in 1994 and 1995 but fell to 70 per cent in 1996 and 66 per cent in 1997 (see Table 4 below).

Table 4: Consolidated Appeal amounts requested and received, 1993-1998

Year	Sudan Consolidated Appeals			All Consolidated Appeals		
	Amounts requested (US$m)	Amounts received (US$m)	Percentage covered	Amounts requested (US$m)	Amounts received (US$m)	Percentage covered
1993	195	124*	64*	3,945	2,529	64
1994	186	163*	88*	2,778	2,221	80
1995	101	51	50	2,347	1,888	80
1996	108	55	52	2,367	1,661	70
1997	121	49	41	1,522	1,006	66
1998	206	314	152**	2,163	1,301	54
All	**917**	**469**	**81**	**15,122**	**10,606**	**68**

* Lower figures for donor contributions (US$102m for 1993 and US$105m for 1994) are given in Karim et al (1996). The discrepancy is probably due to unsystematic ways of communicating and counting contributions among the DHA and donors.

** Despite the fact that more was received than requested overall for this appeal, surplus funding for some projects did not fill deficits for other projects. The coverage of stated needs was assessed at 93 per cent.

Source: Summarised from Porter (2002 pp. 74-77)

The donors partly explained their failure to provide stable funding by complaining that the appeals were not based on well-integrated plans (IASC 2002 p. 6). Each UN implementing agency submitted a batch of projects. They often seemed ill-coordinated both at the level of strategy and of operational mechanics. Sometimes the idea of a disaster appeal was diluted by the inclusion of projects and activities that were not closely related to saving lives in the short term. Donors argued that these could have been funded under different modalities, and that the implementing agencies were presenting them with the appeals as if they were shopping lists in which the donors were being asked to buy whatever the agencies felt like asking for (IASC 2002 p. 5; Porter 2002 p. 9). (Viewed another way, the appeal documents worked like shop windows or bakery display cabinets, from which donors could choose whatever most attracted them on a first-come-first-served basis.)

These complaints were reflected in a set of guidelines (IASC 1994) issued in 1994 by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (a body set up to supervise the CAP and

composed mainly of UN agency heads), following calls by member states in the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and General Assembly for the components of a Consolidated Appeal to be not only mutually integrated, but also prioritized. 'Prioritization' might have called to mind the procedure in development project financing wherein donors or public bodies would use their available money to fund the projects with the highest rates of return according to some scheme of cost-benefit analysis (Little and Mirrlees 1974 pp. 92-93). But to apply a similar procedure in a disaster context would have meant explicitly putting monetary values on lives saved, and such an attempt would certainly have been politically explosive. Instead of requiring that projects be ranked in order of importance, or that hotspots of disaster be singled out within the overall disaster, the IASC interpreted 'prioritization' as the exclusion or bracketing of projects that were not both life-saving and doable within the timeframe of a given appeal. This involved a demand that any project included in the appeal must be within the 'demonstrated capacity' of the agency concerned. In other words, it was insufficient to show that a certain activity was necessary in order to save lives. Rather, a particular agency had to propose to carry out that activity and prove that it could do so: a hard task if the agency had been short of funding for its basic functions on a long-term basis.

The demands that action plans be integrated and prioritized were largely contradictory. While prioritization implies division into components which may be jettisoned according to the quantity of donor resources available, integration means that components are designed to support and complement each other. In practice there can be neither thoroughgoing prioritization nor seamless integration. The management of delivery of humanitarian goods and services is obdurately lumpy. It is carried out through organizations and projects which need to be large enough to be flexible in meeting the contingencies that may arise, through internal redeployment of resources. They nevertheless require funding that is fairly stable – or at least predictable – in order to work effectively. Co-operation and co-ordination between organizations and projects is difficult if these change frequently. Moreover, a requirement to prioritize projects threatens to put them and the organizations that own them into grievous competition with one another. It is hardly surprising that the agencies which must agree on a

Consolidated Appeal as a joint document tend to adopt forms of satisficing behaviour[38] that result in indicative annual plans in which any sharp options are peripheral and the general aim is for organizational stability, operational flexibility and broad coverage.

The Consolidated Appeal for Sudan in 1998 (OCHA 1998a) accordingly prioritized its projects mainly by separating 'emergency needs' from 'rehabilitation' and saying that the former were to be met first. It listed 24 projects, divided between seven UN agencies. By far the largest, budgeted at more than half of the total appeal, was WFP's emergency food assistance. This was not clearly prioritized internally, but whereas the vast majority of the food mentioned in the appeal was requested for delivery 'during the hunger gap period from April to July', Bahr al-Ghazal uniquely was said to need food '*prior to the hunger gap* period from April to July' (p.12, emphasis added). This difference might not be spotted by a casual reader, but probably reflected an intention by at least one person within WFP. It has immense implications. As argued in previous chapters: the seriousness of the famine would have been greatly reduced if donor resources had been made available to support substantial relief by the end of March. Timing was critical.

That such an important condition could have been stated so unobtrusively highlights the problem about the nature of the document in its institutional context. As a statement about a plan, given the assumption of no difficulties of resourcing, this passage is accurate and formally acceptable, though understated. (More particular political and bureaucratic causes of the understatement are expounded in the next Chapter, particularly Section 5.2.3.) But if it is required to show prioritization for the deployment of scarce resources, or to focus attention on an event that needs exceptional measures, the phrasing – and the whole format of the Appeal – is inadequate.

The reports of the ANA, FEWS and GIEWS, on the other hand, were not directly bound to plans, but they were inhibited from functioning effectively as famine early warning by their roles and commitments in a process of which the Consolidated Appeal was the cornerstone. As described above in Section 4.2, they shared much of the same research, and involved cooperation by many of the same individuals and organizations. ANA and

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[38] On the notion of satisficing, first developed by Herbert Simon, see Weirich (2004 pp. 390-392).

GIEWS, both organised within the UN system and committed – like the Appeal – to comprehensive coverage, needed to leave manoeuvring-room for the Appeal-drafting process and the practical and political factors that would need to be considered. This provided an incentive to leave ambiguities and lacunae.

FEWS, as a project funded by USAID, apparently had more freedom to highlight particular matters of concern but it was handicapped in other ways. It still relied on UN and OLS sources for most of its information. Its mandatory disqualification from recommending actions (Buchanan-Smith and Davies 1995) discouraged a determined focus on any particular area and meant that its monthly reports tended more to be general summaries of the situation. FEWS' stated goal was to support systems managed by African countries and regional organizations. But although donor information-gathering is often parasitic on such systems (Devereux 2001b), if they are not in some way owned by a donor, their findings are more susceptible to being dismissed or downplayed (Buchanan-Smith and Davies 1995 pp. 208-211).

4.7 Conclusion: Between two paradigms

Two paradigms of disaster management can be seen here in conflict with one another. The first is the idea of an urgent reaction to an exceptional event. This is what humanitarian action seems to be about at the time when donor publics and officials see an imminent prospect of famine. If this stage is reached it means that any system of early warning and pre-emptive action has failed. Early warning and pre-emptive action are far preferable to feeding emaciated people, so improved systems are always being created. But when they are up and running a different paradigm of food security action is established. Early warning for any given area requires comprehensive surveillance. And once there is comprehensive surveillance, differential risks will be flagged for various locations within that area. It is then likely to become seen as a matter of routine administration to respond to those risks, before any spectre of famine (in the donor sense) becomes distinct.

Under this regime of sustainable disaster governance, once the threat of full-blown famine has faded in the imaginations of officials, the notion that the system is in the business of famine early warning also fades. Early warning, which 'provides the critical

information that activates and gives geographic focus to emergency needs assessment, to targeting, and to activating contingency plans' (Maxwell and Watkins 2003 pp. 77-78) is redundant if regular comprehensive needs assessments are being carried out and responded to. More to the point, it *seems* redundant if these things *seem* to be in place as part of an alleged system of food security management. At this stage both the needs-information and the system that generates it tend to be less compelling for funders (Cutler 1987). Once the system becomes badly underfunded, field workers and agencies may well refer back to the threat of famine in order to attract the resources they see are needed to manage the risks. But when the underfunding is chronic they have to issue such warnings repeatedly. For several years no obvious famine may materialise, partly by chance and partly because the few resources they mobilised were enough to improve the odds. Those who warn then become vulnerable to the accusation of 'crying wolf' because it is easy to elide the distinction between a warning and an unconditional prediction.[39] Explicit famine early warning is thus relegated to fringe status, equipped with no obvious triggers to pull.

Not only is it deprived of its own triggers: it cannot compile a strong argument for someone else to pull a trigger because the analytical tools that it is allowed – the meanings of words, numbers and their relationships – are degraded. How this happens is explored in the next chapter.

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[39] Belief in a 'crying wolf syndrome' has often been reflected in the wider literature of humanitarian response (Buchanan-Smith and Davies 1995 p. 206; Whaites 2000; Pantuliano 2006 p. 3; Ó Gráda 2010 p. 28). But there does not seem to have been any rigorous study substantiating the existence of something that could be called a syndrome, perhaps because such a study would be very difficult. It would depend on pinning down definitive aid agency statements that could be verified or falsified by subsequent events. The difficulty of doing this in general and particularly for the case of Bahr al-Ghazal in 1998 is described in the next chapter.

5 INFORMATION AND ACTION (2): EFFECTS OF POLITICAL PREJUDICE

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 4 has begun to demonstrate how the possibility of effective famine warning in southern Sudan in 1997-8 was much fainter than it appeared. In particular it has shown that, although from a humanistic perspective the issued warnings should have been adequate to prompt an urgent relief response in early February, they embraced enough uncertainties, inaccuracies and contradictions to be discredited by politicians and bureaucrats who had other agendas. These flaws were to a great extent created by features of the large-scale institutional arrangements for running relief operations: particularly the way the assessment of needs and risks was subordinated to the formation of a fundable action plan through the CAP.

Chapter 5 continues the investigation of the deceptive relationship between information and action in humanitarian response. It looks at the detail of how information about humanitarian need was produced within the abovementioned framework of large-scale institutions, so as to create a fair impression of scientific rigour while in fact bending to political interests and contingencies. The first main section describes how the process of needs assessment was elaborate and at some points sophisticated, but the meaning of the data being created was at various points vitiated by a failure to maintain the integrity of analytic terms, and the ignoring or covering-up of crucial elements of ignorance. A second section examines the particular role in this process of the Food Economy Approach (FEA), finding that, although it represented an enterprising and intelligent effort to bring more rationality into the needs-assessment process, it was bent to the service of a larger drive for economy and retrenchment. As an embodiment of the idea of expertise, a provider of credible numbers, and an upholder of the impression that human needs in a war zone were amenable to routine management, FEA functioned to validate the flawed OLS-CAP system and its subjection to donor parsimony. The chapter's third main section presents a narrative and analysis of a linked pair of

controversies from 1998, about whether various actors had been right to deny that the situation amounted to famine and to oppose a public charitable appeal in the UK. This narrative illustrates ways in which factual characterizations of the crisis were influenced by prior ideological positions and interests on the part of some actors, and disseminated through the network of relationships between those actors and others in the aid system.

5.2 POLITICS VERSUS TECHNIQUE IN HUMANITARIAN INFORMATION

5.2.1 Estimates of vulnerable/needy population

In the Consolidated Appeal and other OLS statements about Bahr al-Ghazal in late 1997 and early 1998, it was never clear exactly what was represented by the figures that purported to quantify needs. The descriptors were often incomplete or otherwise imprecise, and used a variety of apparently-interchangeable terms. The figure of approximately 350,000 was cited by Short and Deng as an assessment of 'vulnerable population'. But there have been many interpretations of the meaning of 'vulnerability', without any overwhelming consensus on the use of the term (Weichselgartner 2001). It has been adumbrated by some in WFP as 'the probability of an acute decline in food access or consumption levels below minimum survival needs' (Recalde 2000). However, this formulation still leaves at least three important questions to be answered.

- Firstly, is one to understand 'consumption levels below minimum survival needs' as applying for a period sufficiently long to cause death? If not, then how is one to interpret these levels in principle, and measure them in practice?
- Secondly, when aggregating vulnerable people, is one to count a person with a high probability of below-minimum consumption the same as someone with a lower (albeit above-normal) probability of this? If not, then presumably the aggregated number is the sum of the probabilities for individuals, in other words the probable total number of people whose consumption will fall below minimum bodily requirements. But if people at different levels of risk are all counted, what is the minimum cut-off point to qualify for inclusion? In the environment of war, presumably everyone carries substantially more risk of suddenly encountering a food crisis than most people elsewhere.

- Thirdly, does the probability ignore the likely response of aid agencies (and other actors that could be considered outside the system)? If not, what does it assume about the response of these actors?

If the answers to the three primary questions above are all 'yes', then an estimate of 350,000 vulnerable people would seem merely to imply that an indeterminate number of people between zero and 350,000 would die as a result of the disaster if no special action were to be taken. This seems to be the sense also of an FAO Special Alert on 15th May which characterised the 350,000 as being 'at risk of starvation' (FAO 1998a). Interpreted in these ways, the figure gives no hard information about the intensity of the threat apart from putting a cap on the prospective excess mortality.

The source of this figure, the Consolidated Appeal document, had notably avoided begging these questions of interpretation. It had referred merely to 352,700 'beneficiaries' (itself a highly problematic term, roughly meaning 'proposed consumers') of relief food in the area of Bahr al-Ghazal covered by the Southern Sector (OCHA 1998a p. 28). These were part of 485,000 'displaced and war-affected persons' from both sectors to whom it was planned to send such relief (p. 12). It gives these people virtually no other attributes that distinguish them from all the others in the region (who were all, surely, 'war-affected'). Indeed, it even avoids committing itself to saying that they had been pre-identified as a group; 352,700 was apparently just the number that the agencies aimed to serve. A reader's inclination to assume that the welfare conditions of this many people had met some determinate criteria was fed by the preliminary statement that the needs to be met by OLS 'were identified during the 1997 OLS Annual Needs Assessments and the 1997 FAO/WFP Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission' (p.1). However, none the reports on these exercises retrieved under the present study provide either figures for the size of needy population groups or (as discussed in Section 4.4.1) specific accounts of the process by which such figures were generated. Secondary sources indicate that agencies involved in the ANA had estimated that 250,000 people in rebel-held areas of Bahr al-Ghazal would need food assistance in 1998 (OLS 1998e p. 2; Wells and others 1998a) before this number was augmented by the estimated 100,000 displaced at the end of January. The expression 'in need of urgent ... assistance' was used by WFP in relation to the 350,000 in its Emergency Reports of late March and early April (WFP 1998m; 1998q).

Meanings of 'need' are perhaps even more slippery than those of 'vulnerability' (Darcy and Hofmann 2003; Smillie and Minear 2003; Kent 2004a; Development Initiatives 2006 pp. 28-29). Here as in other disaster situations (Darcy and Hofmann 2003 pp. 16-17) the word helps in the nominal construction of a one-to-one relationship between the condition of a group of people and what the relief agencies plan or propose to do. (If N people need relief and N people are given relief, then the intervention can be deemed successful.) SRRA field staff at one field location in 1998 contended that 'the population figures were based more on WFP's capacity than on the needs within the county' (Task Force 1998 p. 39). This argument will be pursued and expanded shortly. First, a more empirical account is desirable, of how the figures of vulnerable or needy population were ostensibly produced by the technical needs-assessment process.

Under the FEA, as it was functioning in 1997[40], the population of a surveyed area would notionally be divided into three or four groups, according to criteria of material wealth. The relative size of each group would be established, and, for each group, the food surplus or deficit. This was done by comparing the proportions of different types of food currently consumed with the proportions considered normal for people in that locality. It was a methodological assumption that people normally one way or another obtained enough food to survive (even though the usual incidence of suffering and death might have been considered very high by an outsider). Deviations from the normal range of food-sources within a given socio-economic group would indicate responses to current conditions of varying degrees of desperation. If people had run down their productive assets below a critical level, or were failing to plant enough seed for the next cultivation season, that meant they had fallen below the 'self-sufficiency cut-off point' and this could be a justification for providing food aid. It should be noted, however, that the perspective on people's economic and social reproduction could rather short-term – a matter of two or three years – or archaic – based on memories of how people lived 'before the war'. This meant that if a long-term trend had plunged people into an unsustainable and risky condition, it might not be picked up under the basic

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[40] The information about the FEA in the remainder of this section is based on informal conversations with many people over several years, and two semi-structured interviews of people involved in the food economy assessments in 1997 (2005c; Interview 2005e), besides documentary sources (Boudreau 1994; 1998; FEAU 1996b; Seaman and others 2000; WFP/SCF 2000; Boudreau and Coutts 2002).

methodology (although it is true that monitors were sometimes warned that this methodology was not the be all and end all).[41] Furthermore, the standard analysis did not involve measurements of malnutrition, morbidity or mortality rates, and did not provide direct ways of predicting such things or relating them to its notion of 'vulnerability'. If another agency was running a clinic or feeding centre in the area and producing statistics on malnutrition or mortality, its data might be noted by the WFP assessors, but this was peripheral to the main approach. The main point of reference was the normality of economic activity in a particular place during the war, rather than normality of human functioning[42]. Its insensitivity to mortality levels led the OLS Review to comment that the FEA was unable to distinguish between acute food insecurity and famine (Karim and others 1996 p. 128).

In the ANA, fieldworkers under the FEAU conducted studies at several locations to decide which wealth groups could be considered 'vulnerable', to ascertain the degree of vulnerability, and to estimate the vulnerable as a proportion of their local populations. From this could be calculated a percentage food deficit for the community as a whole. The results for survey sites in Bahr al-Ghazal were as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: FEAU site summary data for Bahr al-Ghazal in the 1997/8 ANA

Location	Vulnerable population as % of surveyed population	Percentage food deficit
Marial Baai (Aweil West County)	40	10
Ayien (Aweil West County)	90	35
Agaigai (Gogrial County)	50	25
Bararud (Gogrial County)	0	0
Malual Akon (Aweil East County)	60	15
Adior (Lakes Region)	40	5
Tonj (Lakes Region)	30	10
Rumbek (Lakes Region)	35	5

Source: FEAU (1997 p. 18)

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[41] Mark Bradbury has observed that aid agency needs assessments too often rely on a comparative approach ('Is this year worse than usual?') that loses sight of absolute standards of welfare (Bradbury 1998; Bradbury and others 2003).

[42] The literature on normality of human functioning or well-being is large. Key texts include Doyal and Gough (1991), Nussbaum (1988; 1992; 2000), Nussbaum and Sen (1993), Sen (1993; 1999).

The selection of survey sites was heavily determined by accessibility, and it is unclear how representative it was of Bahr al-Ghazal in general (Macaskill 2000), or how representative it was believed to be. Another way of looking at this problem is to ask what population the sample was taken to be representative of, when it helped determine or justify the absolute numbers of people to be deemed vulnerable.

Population figures were perennially a matter of dispute between operational aid agencies, the local authorities in both GOS- and rebel-held areas, and the donors (Duffield and others 1999 p. 99; Deng 2002a p. 29). For the whole Southern Sector population the SRRA had sometimes put forward figures of up to twelve million while UN agencies were working on the basis of as little as four million (Howe 2003 p. 141). For the rural areas of Bahr al-Ghazal in 1998 it seems that WFP was making its calculations based on a relevant population of 617,000.[43] The SRRA was using a much higher figure; possibly as high as two million.[44] OLS Assessments the following year raised the numbers again. After the 1998 debacle, UN agencies and SRRA reached a greater consensus on population figures, through the process of a campaign to inoculate children against polio (Howe 2003 p. 141). WFP's 1999/2000 ANA calculations then put the Southern Sector population of Bahr al-Ghazal at nearly 2.2 million (Fielding and Tillman 2000 Table 1). Another survey led by UNICEF later in 2000 used a figure of nearly 2.9million (UNICEF 2000 p. 7). So it appears that estimates of vulnerable population could be influenced by as much as a factor of four simply by different

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[43] This figure was quoted by a UNICEF spokesperson in May (Doran 1998). It is consistent with a calculation back from the ANA result of 250,000 vulnerable people combined with the data in Table 5 which suggests that about 40% of people in the sample frame were vulnerable.

[44] According to Deng, who had been in charge of this office at the time, the SRRA's ANA in late 1997 estimated the number of vulnerable in Bahr al-Ghazal as about 1.12 million persons (Deng 1999 p. 103). The SRRA Database and Monitoring Office in March 1998 published a document in which it reported that the rate of vulnerability in the resident population had been assessed at 56% (SRRA DMO 1998 p. 2), which implies the sample frame figure of two million. Admittedly, this document refers to the number of vulnerable in the resident (as opposed to displaced) population as only 500,000, which would imply that the total resident population was only about 900,000, but there are enough other anomalies in the statistics in this document to make one think this quite likely to be an arithmetic mistake.

assumptions about the total population size of the province, and possibly the delineation of the vulnerable part of it that the sample was supposed to represent.

How could assessors live with such statistical instability? While FEAU field staff often took a view of the population figures relevant to their studies in order to present a recommended relief requirement in their internal reports, such judgements were separable from their food economy expertise. WFP would remove these numbers from the copies of the reports that it released to other agencies (Interview 2005c). In order to avoid controversies, a decision had been made at a high level of OLS, to avoid mentioning population figures, or even the proportions of the overall population to be targeted, but only absolute numbers of targeted beneficiaries (HCU 1998b p. 2). Population figures thus existed in a twilight zone as working assumptions within a group of aid-workers. As such, while they enjoyed some protection from complaints by GOS and the rebels' organizations, they were susceptible to informal pressures such as donor prejudices. According to a long-serving UN officer in Nairobi, interviewed in 2005, the local WFP chief in the mid-1990s was always asking his staff to reduce needs figures for the purposes of 'credibility' (Interview 2005f). The malleability of scientific-looking concepts and data that this section has described, begins to show how the data on which donor and aid agency decisions were apparently based may more accurately be seen as the product of decisions and attitudes that had already been formed.

5.2.2 Ratio between estimates of needy people and needed food

Discrepancy between the accounts of overall population figures was not the only factor that bedevilled the conversion of the proportions of people deemed vulnerable into requirements for food aid. Guesses (whether more or less informed) also had to be made about the degree to which food aid, when distributed, would reach the vulnerable members of the community in proportion to their vulnerability. Could relief be targeted at particular families within the community? If not, how much needed to be given to relatively well-off people as a corollary of filling the deficits of the vulnerable? WFP food monitors for the Southern Sector had discussed these questions in 1995 and, failing to reach consensus, resolved to standardize two different approaches (Fielding 1995; 1999). For places in Upper Nile it was decided that all food distributions should serve whole communities, mainly on the grounds that any discrimination against the

relatively-rich would have discouraged them from adhering to long-established traditions under which they could be relied on to help the relatively-poor in extremity. In Bahr al-Ghazal, on the other hand, the monitors were enthusiastic about the potential of village relief committees to channel relief directly to the most needy (Gullick and others 1995; Ashley and Matus 1995). These committees were already being formed at WFP's behest, composed of 13 members each, seven of whom were required to be women. This approach was particularly attractive in the light of contemporary agendas in WFP worldwide for incorporation of indigenous capacity-building and the empowerment of women and minorities (WFP 1997a p. iv). The FEA assessors mostly also worked as relief distribution monitors, so they would have been able to incorporate their understandings of distribution modalities into their formal and informal reports of food aid needs.

This difference in approach between Bahr al-Ghazal and Upper Nile made for a relatively low estimate of intended beneficiary numbers (but perhaps a larger food allocation per person) in the former as compared with the latter. It seems to be reflected in the estimates of the 1998 Consolidated Appeal, set out in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Target food aid quantities and recipient numbers for southern Sudan in the 1998 Consolidated Appeal

Region	Est imated food deficits	Food aid target (tonnes)	Intended beneficiaries			Av. target food aid per beneficiary (kg)
			Both Sectors	Northern Sector	Southern Sector	
Bahr al-Ghazal	'A 50 – 60 % food deficit is expected for the region.'	17,500	485,000	132,300	352,700	36
Upper Nile	'… expected to range only between 5 and 10 % in most areas'	15,494	920,640	597,140	323,500	17
Equatoria	'… ranged from 10 to 50 % last year'	15,904	410,261	170,961	239,300	39
Total		**48,898**	**1,815,901**	**900,401**	**915,500**	**27**

Source: OCHA (1998a pp. 12, 13, 27-28)

It can be seen that similar quantities of aid were requested for each of the regions of Southern Sudan. For Upper Nile the aid was planned to be spread between more recipients although the food crisis was expected to be much less intense here than in Bahr al-Ghazal. If a 'vulnerable person' is to be equated with a 'beneficiary' in the Appeal document then it is clear that the former concept is not using a stringent cut-off point for the degree of vulnerability. Deng's argument (Deng 1999 pp. 98-100) that the FEA failed to distinguish between the respective situations in Bahr al-Ghazal and Upper Nile is thus fallacious insofar as it is based on comparison of the target beneficiary numbers for each region. It fails to take into account the way that the extra factors of assumed ration levels and overall population sizes affected these numbers. The number of intended beneficiaries is not a straightforward indicator of whether there is a high risk of famine. Still more disruptive of his argument is the fact that political pressures were involved in the production of the figures, as the following sections describe.

5.2.3 Amounts of food required

The total food aid requirement for Southern Sudan in 1998 was, as shown in Table 6, put at about 49,000 tonnes by the Consolidated Appeal. Of this, 39,000 tonnes was stated as being required for the Southern Sector. This estimate had been reduced from one of 54,000 tonnes arrived at by the field agencies at the end of the ANA in October 1997 (Howe 2003 p. 142; Interview 2005a). Moreover, although the Appeal stated the need as 39,000 tonnes, it only requested the resources for 26,000 tonnes. The difference between these two figures was explained as resulting partly (about 7,000 tonnes) from 'expected problems in obtaining clearances to conflict areas in southern Sudan and expected restrictions on the use of an additional aircraft to increase air delivery capacity' (OCHA 1998a p. 28), and partly from 'anticipated carry-over stocks...from 1997' of 6,000 tonnes (ibid.). The first of these reductions is striking both for its apparent prescience and its defeatism. It might have been introduced between 2nd February, when GOS imposed its ban on flights to Bahr al-Ghazal, and 18th February, when the Consolidated Appeal was published. But this need not have been the case. Denial of clearance for flights and other means of access had been seen as substantially reducing relief deliveries the previous year (FAO and WFP 1997 Paragraph 3.3.1). However, low levels of donor funding had also been recognised as a cause of shortfall at that time (ibid.). This suggests that OLS was already locked into a cycle in which the

desire of donors to reduce costs was in some ways complementary with GOS propensity to restrict humanitarian access. The former may have both validated and encouraged the latter, and both together were almost represented as resulting from a relatively low level of humanitarian need.

However, the reductions in projected quantities were evidently brought about through a lengthy and complicated process of debate. Some idea of this is given by the attempts of FEWS Nairobi to provide advance news of the official needs estimates in its monthly bulletins. On 28th October 1997 it stated that the ANA exercise had taken place but 'the final report is not yet available.... OLS is currently finalizing its 1998 request to donors' (FEWS 1997a). A month later FEWS had to reiterate that 'the final report is not yet finished' but was able to refer meanwhile to a 'provisional request for 27,000 MT of relief food' in the Southern Sector (FEWS 1997c). The bulletin at the end of December, however, declared that the Sector was 'expected to request 30,000 MT of food for 1998. Its annual needs assessment anticipated needs of 35,000 MT of food, but limited delivery capacity and a scarcity of funds from donors has led to the reduced request to the international community' (FEWS 1997b). Even at the end of January, the prognostication was not accurate; the requirement was again put at 30,000 MT 'although a reassessment may be necessary as the year progresses' (FEWS 1998a). Of significance in this series of bulletins is not only the vacillation of estimates and the fact that the uncertainty persisted for more than three months before the publication of the CAP, but also that the lengthy persistence of uncertainty was unforeseen at the end of October.

Clearly, some kind of pressure was being exerted to reduce the request. An evaluation team for DANIDA (the Danish government's aid department) noted that, despite strong alarms in the wording of the 1998 CAP, the requested budget was lower in many key areas than in 1997 (Buchanan-Smith and others 1999 Section 14.3). 'OLS staff explained this anomaly as a result of the negative donor reaction to the 1997 CAP. In other words, they appealed only for what they expected the donors to give' (ibid.).[45] But

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[45] This tactic has been discussed more generally in the literature of humanitarian response. Donor contributions are partly a function of what operational agencies request, leading to an element of game-playing behaviour. If agencies expect donors to under-fund their requests, they may exaggerate their

donor power was also working more directly. In late 1997, senior WFP staff for the Southern Sector held a meeting in Nairobi with donor representatives to decide how much food they would formally request. The FEAU Manager of the time later recalled:

> I remember distinctly to this day - because I've always regretted not making more noise at the time - but, [a WFP operational manager] came into my office and said: 'Look, we're all in a meeting with the donors, and they only want to give us 25 or 30 thousand tonnes. Nobody's going to die, are they?' And he said: 'Look, I've got to go back in the meeting. Tell me, because I'm new here.' And I said: 'Well, that's not what the analysis says. The analysis says something quite different.' I think it's closer to 50 or 60 thousand tonnes at that point being requested. Anyway, he went back in and they basically agreed to submit to donor pressure. (Interview 2005a)[46]

UNICEF, too, was pressured to cut its requests in key areas: 40 per cent off its food security budget and 60 per cent off emergency health compared with the previous year (Buchanan-Smith and others 1999 Section 14.3). The budget was being squeezed thus at the same time as the US was increasing its sabre-rattling against GOS (see Section 3.4.3), and the two things are probably not merely coincidental.

Still, the process of formulating the Consolidated Appeal involved more struggles than those directly between the UN agencies and the donors. For a start, the various UN agencies had different mandates and interests that needed to be reconciled. More

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assessed requirements. But if donors suspect this is happening, their scepticism is in danger of having a long-term negative effect on the agency. The result can be that agencies pitch their requests at the smaller of: the amount they think the market can bear (Reindorp and Wiles 2001 p. 37; Macrae 2002 p. 31), and the highest amount they can use efficiently and accountably under their short-term capacity constraints (Smillie and Minear 2003; Development Initiatives 2006 p. 29).

[46] The interviewee later published an article telling the story in slightly more formal terms, as follows. 'Decisionmaking was conducted behind closed doors by donors and WFP senior managers. In the lead up to that time there was strong donor pressure to reduce the level of food aid, and newly appointed decisionmakers in the programme director's office at WFP (then based at the UN complex in Gigiri, Nairobi) were not familiar with the situation on the ground or the analytical methodology' (Sharp 2007 p. S106). A donor official told me a version of the story without the appearance of donor characters: that the needs assessment from the FEAU manager had been revised by the WFP operational manager according to 'institutional' factors (Interview 2005b).

importantly, the politics of the Consolidated Appeal were chronically complicated by the war in Sudan, consequent division of OLS into Northern and Southern Sectors, and the disjointed policies and management of those sectors (see Section 1.3.2 above). The drafting of the annual Appeals was a highly politicized and complex matter in which the UN offices in each Sector needed to be able to justify their positions in the face of expectations from local authorities, NGOs and others in their respective domains. It will be recalled that the OLS co-ordinator in Khartoum was under continual pressure from GOS on grounds of its sovereignty, as against the former's desire to protect (at least an appearance of) humanitarian neutrality.

An important aspect of this was that GOS continually pressed for a larger role in the drafting of the Consolidated Appeals. The UN General Assembly's mandate for the CAP had specified that the document had to be agreed with the sovereign state (UN 1991 Paragraph 31). However, the conditions under which the sovereign state can be induced to agree with a draft of the Consolidated Appeal had been left open to contestation. GOS tried to ensure that a large proportion of food aid was delivered through the Northern Sector (HCU 1998b p. 2). The balance of aid deliveries on each side of the military divide was always a subject of contention. Although OLS was officially committed to the idea that aid deliveries must be proportionate only to assessed humanitarian need, there had also been a practice – amounting to a tacit deal – since the time of the very first OLS action plan (GOS and UN 1989; GOS and others 1989) that the two Sectors should receive approximately equal amounts. According to an internal OLS document which suggests the instrumentality of nondecisionmaking[47], 'OLS does not attempt to create parity between the warring parties although...food deliveries are in fact balanced' (HCU 1998b p. 2).[48]

The OLS Review had called the Consolidated Appeal in 1996 'far from transparent'. It is not difficult to see why this should have been so, both then and in 1998. Easier to win

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[47] The idea that political power can work through hard-to-trace avoidance and prevention of decisions was famously set out by Bachrach and Baratz (1962).

[48] Illustrating this, the same document says: 'WFP delivery reports...show that in 1996 55% of food deliveries went to Government areas and 45% to SPLM areas. In 1997 48% of WFP food was delivered to Government areas and 52% to SPLM areas' (HCU 1998b).

acceptance than a clear and concise document with which parties could have a clear quarrel, was a long product of many insertions and amendments, ending with lacunae and ambiguities which could be interpreted in different ways. Such political sensitivities can explain why the prioritization of Bahr al-Ghazal – hinging on a single word as described in Section 4.6 – was so low-key and easily-misinterpreted. It would have been very hard to mobilize consensus for a more pronounced emphasis on a single region. Therefore there was cause for the expression used to convey prioritization to be unobtrusive and flexible. It could give a mandate for radical prioritization, or, on the other hand, it could be ignored or fudged.[49]

Despite the downward pressure exerted by donors upon needs estimates, and the distortions or levelling effects of political compromise, it should be remembered that the donors did not even supply the agreed requirements soon enough for the relief to reach the field when it was needed. If they had done so, fewer people would have had to sell their last remaining assets and/or become displaced, thence contributing to a knock-on effect by putting additional pressure on their neighbours. In that case, the series of increases in the estimated number of needy people – which some critics have seen as evidence of faulty needs-assessment – would probably have been far less dramatic, simply because the escalation of real needs would have been smaller. However, as the next section shows, the continual rise in the estimates of need was not wholly a reflection of increasing hardship on the ground.

5.2.4 Revision of relief estimates: leading or following delivery capacity?

It can be seen from the foregoing sections that Clare Short's complaint that WFP's estimate of 350,000 vulnerable people in Bahr al-Ghazal was too low as of mid-May (see Section 4.4.2), cannot be accepted as fair criticism of the needs assessment in September 1997 or even the Consolidated Appeal in mid-February 1998. This is

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[49] It was fudged by Clare Short and her Department when called to explain their actions: they glossed the Appeal's challenge – '[d]eliver...relief food for 485,000 displaced and war-affected persons prior to the hunger gap period from April to July' (OCHA 1998a) – as: 'The UN appeal...identified 485,000 displaced and war affected people in need of assistance in Bahr el Ghazal from April to July' (Short 1998b Paragraph 20).

because the estimate was from the beginning greatly conditioned by donor pressure and other political factors. But Short's complaint can be regarded as raising two other questions. Firstly: did the figure actually constrain the rate of relief donation and delivery before it was revised? Secondly: given the rapidly-increasing sense of alarm between mid-February and mid-May, why did not WFP/OLS revise the needs figure in this period?

The first of these questions can now quickly be answered in the negative. Even if the official OLS statements of projected food needs and beneficiaries in Bahr al-Ghazal bore little relation to any reality on the ground, they still ran ahead of the resources that were provided. As described in Chapter 4, during the crucial months of February, March and April 1998, the actors generally agreed that not enough food was being delivered. Nevertheless there was a lack of cash for air transport and other support costs. This, in combination with the flight restrictions imposed by the Government of Sudan, formed the binding constraint on the rate of delivery. The main constraint from early May until August was the difficulty of scaling-up quickly despite plentiful funds.

On the second question, OLS personnel have attributed the delay in revision largely to the logistical difficulty of sending assessment teams to the field during the period of severe flight restrictions (WFP 1998e; OLS 1998e p. 2). But the restrictions were effectively removed on 2nd April. Immediately after that, WFP, still badly under-resourced, concentrated on setting up relief distributions at new centres (WFP 1998q). It was more than two weeks later that it 'sent an emergency mission to nine key locations...to determine how many more people may now be in need of urgent humanitarian assistance' (WFP 1998c). But a further month passed without a new overall statement of needs being issued. Why? It was not that the agencies failed to infer that the number of urgently needy people in the rural areas was likely to be increasing swiftly. The OLS monthly report for February stated: 'OLS believes that the humanitarian needs will increase before they diminish' (OLS 1998a). A WFP press release on 24th April reported: 'Concern is growing that the number of people in dire need may have soared beyond the 350,000 identified in February' (WFP 1998c). Nevertheless, this figure was still useful in order to illustrate how thinly the available relief was being spread, and to emphasize the need for more donor resources (WFP 1998n; 1998c). A higher figure was unnecessary in order to justify more aid. At the

same time, the conflicting political pressures and conceptual disintegration described in the foregoing sections provided little basis for the production and legitimation of such a figure.

When a revised estimate – 595,000 needy people – was issued, it was clearly not the result of a sophisticated assessment process. WFP reported on 22nd May that '[t]he higher number was determined after aid agencies exchanged their most recent field reports which indicate that the number of people requiring emergency food relief has grown from six weeks ago' (WFP 1998e). This suggests that the figure was related to the numbers of people on food distribution lists at field level. Indeed, it has been reported that WFP's procedure for the revision of its appeals was understood by its staff as depending on new data from distributions rather than more technical forms of need-assessment (Buchanan-Smith and others 1999 Section 14.3). Interpretation of the distribution data presumably took into account both the magnitude of current registration lists and their rate of increase. Also evidently important was the legitimising procedure of fixing a consensus between aid consortium members. According to Clare Short, she was the one who prompted the revision by telephoning WFP Headquarters in Rome, informing them of the higher estimate made by her Field Operations Manager (Wells and others 1998b Question 33). The move may also have been made in the light of meetings on 18th May of the OLS International Advisory Committee (USAID 1998a) and of EU Development Ministers (Short 1998b Paragraph 30). In summary, all these actors were probably involved – informally rather than officially – in the process of arriving at an acceptable figure.

Whatever the exact processes and rationales behind the new estimate, the production of a substantially increased figure was clearly becoming necessary for many of the actors involved by mid-May, in order to prevent the official target being overtaken by the actual rate of relief deliveries. Following Kofi Annan's brokerage of the access deal and linked launch of new funding appeals at the beginning of the month, money had begun to pour in (see Sections 3.3.2 and 3.4.4). This had quickly enabled WFP to increase its delivery capacity vastly. Its fleet of contract cargo planes operating into Southern Sudan had expanded from one C-130 and one Buffalo in late April, to four or five C-130s and two Buffaloes on 15th May (WFP 1998o; 1998i; 1998d). Its delivery capacity had suddenly become great enough to provide much more than a standard relief half-ration

to 350,000 people. The increase in the targeted population to 595,000 was announced just when the aircraft capacity was becoming available.

On 11th June, the WFP-SS coordinator announced a further revision. 595,000 rose to 701,000. Even less attempt was made this time to present the increase as stemming from technical assessment. In the WFP press release that relayed the announcement (WFP 1998f), the figures were not described as estimates of vulnerable population but the numbers of people WFP was feeding in June and planned to feed in July. This rise was approximately in parallel with an increase in planned the rate of food delivery in to the Southern Sector as a whole, from 6,500 to 9,600 tonnes per month, and in line with a rapid increase in the rate of contributions from donors. By the end of June, WFP's reported donations had reached $59 million, and accordingly its appeal was increased from $66 million to $138 million (WFP 1998g). By the end of July, funding reached $116 million and the appeal was pushed up to $154 million (WFP 1998j).

Thus through the first half of 1998 one can trace a string of headline numbers succeeding each other – 250,000 to 350,000 to 595,000 to 701,000 – and keeping just ahead of an increasing volume of resource donations and relief delivery. But it is unrealistic to think of them as prior products of neutral expertise which then determined aid activity. The figures had become reactive rather than predictive (Duffield and others 1999 p. 97). But that is not all. They were reactive not to current human needs, nor to the opportunity to discover suffering people,[50] nor even to the sizes of current distribution lists. Rather, they were reactive to the field capacity to meet needs. They were reflections rather than causes of what operational agencies realistically hoped donors would fund them to do, products of the processes that they ostensibly led.

5.3 HUMANITARIAN RETRENCHMENT AND THE FOOD ECONOMY APPROACH

The severe budgetary pressure that was being experienced by OLS in late 1997 and early 1998 can be dated as beginning in 1994-5. As shown in Table 4 on Page 141, in

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[50] Such was the interpretation of the requirement-increase by a DFID official in June. "'As new areas open up undoubtedly they will find more people. That has been the pattern all the way through May. When you get access you find you have got a bigger problem'" (Wells and others 1998b).

1995 the Consolidated Appeal asked for about half what had been requested the previous year, and the actual amount received was about a third of what had been received in 1994. OLS food aid fell by about 70 per cent (Karim and others 1996 p. 140). Some but not all of this fall represented a shift towards funding NGOs outside the framework of OLS (ibid. pp. 237-238).

The general retrenchment is attributable partly to international donor trends. Some of this is due to factors internal to donor states. In the US, lower aid levels were generally associated with attempts to balance the domestic budget, and the gaining of a majority in Congress by the Republican Party in 1996 (Stoddard 2002 p. 43). But the way that crises were perceived also played a part. Governmental donors tended to concentrate their humanitarian spending on key political hotspots, and in each of the four years from 1994 to 1997, about 60 per cent of contributions to CAPs were devoted to the former Yugoslavia and the Great Lakes region of Africa in the aftermath of the Rwandan Genocide (Macrae and others 2002). Relief operations to other African states and countries under complex political emergency suffered acute shortages (Bradbury 1998). Complex emergencies were coming to be seen in the Rich World as more intractable than expected, frustrating the hopes for a new world order that had flourished soon after the end of the Cold War (Karim and others 1996 p. 43; Bradbury 1998; Copson 1999; Alden 2000).

One of the problems posed for the 'new humanitarianism' amid ongoing conflicts was how to conceive of its aims. Compared with providing relief for an isolated catastrophe, it was less easy to think of the mission as simply being one of getting things back to normal. Or, rather, it was less clear what kind of normality to apply. Humanitarian aid could not re-create pre-war conditions. Some aid actors, picking up ideas pioneered by Henry Shue (1980), advocated sets of basic welfare standards or rights (Simmons 1995; Ebersole and others 1995; Short 1998a; Sphere Project 2007).[51] But to apply even the most modest set of standards consistently within a territory – let alone between territories worldwide – was a formidable and potentially very costly challenge. What

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[51] See also the academic literature listed in Footnote 42 on Page 150. Another beacon for those who took this view was the 1995 World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, for which the idea of the human rights of welfare were central (UN 1995).

tended to happen in practice in chronic disasters was a retreat to development aid practices, and a rhetoric of 'sustainability' in which the aim of aid – even in the midst of war – was to encourage self-help activities and social service projects based on local voluntary participation and co-operative contributions (African Rights 1995a; Dichter 1997; Bradbury 1998). Because such aid was dependent on the identification of apparently viable projects, rather than of human needs, it was less rigorously demanding on donor finances and consciences. Such policy and rhetoric was widely apparent in Sudan at this time (Karim and others 1996 p. 150; Duffield 2001 pp. 231-236; Marriage 2006b pp. 482-488; 2006a pp. 123-127).

Although the above pattern was seen in many other countries too (Bradbury 1998), Table 4 (p. 50) suggests that the retrenchment for Sudan was more severe than average for countries where there was a Consolidated Appeal. There were several special factors accentuating the trend here: increased hostility towards OLS on the part of GOS resulting in more obstruction of access (DHA 1996; Karim and others 1996 p. 17); increased insecurity in Upper Nile and Bahr al-Ghazal also making greater access problems (ibid.); and a 'changing pattern of need' (Karim and others 1996 p. 17). This last phrase meant that while there may have been much hardship in the increasingly insecure areas, many of the relatively-peaceful ones were enjoying the benefits of a good harvest at the end of 1994 (p. 119). The first two of the causes were related to the collapse of the process for peace in southern Sudan in late 1994. After this process had gathered a great deal of momentum that year under the auspices of IGADD with support from donor countries, GOS brusquely derailed it at the fourth round of talks in September, when its representative refused to acknowledge understandings reached in the previous round, and spoke provocatively of a mission to Islamize the African continent (Wondu 1995). OLS had since its inception been associated with the idea of helping to promote peace (GOS and UN 1989; Minear and others 1991; Burr and Collins 1995), and the loss of optimism in this regard probably discouraged donation.

The introduction of the FEA in southern Sudan coincided with this humanitarian retrenchment, and proved, in important respects, amenable to it. In 1993, when access by air to Bahr al-Ghazal and Upper Nile increased dramatically, WFP recognised that its logistical capacity had outstripped its ability to analyze needs (Winter 1993). It could not easily describe the relation between overall strategy and the sending of any

particular quantity of food to some particular location. Among its most attentive critics in southern Sudan was the Country Director of the UK chapter of the Save the Children Fund (SCF), Philip Winter. As a matter of policy, SCF was interested in catalysing improvements in UN agencies (Winter 1992-1994 7th September 1992). It considered itself comparatively well-connected with food security expertise internationally, and offered the benefits of this to WFP Southern Sector in the form of staff training and/or secondments (Winter 1993). At this stage, it was not clear that the content of the expertise would be the FEA; indeed the FEA was still at an early stage of development, in which its initial ideas were being tried out in Ethiopia (Boudreau and Coutts 2002 p. 5). However, in February 1994 John Seaman, who was the head of SCF's Policy Unit and one of the inventors of FEA, visited southern Sudan, and the agreement was made with WFP to accept the secondment of an expert 'to help relate food deliveries more meaningfully to food security' (Winter 1992-1994 8th February 1994): in other words to produce a rational procedure for discovering specific numerical food deficits, whether for particular locations or for southern Sudan in general.

Almost everybody liked it. The secondee and other consultants arrived mid-1994, and began training WFP's field food monitors in the approach. The latter were enthusiastic. It gave them a sense of enhanced professionalism; when they learned and applied the FEA techniques they felt empowered (Karim and others 1996 p. 118). Donors were happy too. One of the field monitors and assessors in this period said later: 'Donors liked the fact that we knew what we were talking about. When they are going to look...about giving funds to a programme, it's about confidence. They have to trust and have the confidence that we are not exaggerating, that we are not inflating the situation' (Interview 2005c). The rise of FEA corresponded with a decline in the use of nutritional surveillance, which had been a major food needs assessment tool in OLS prior to 1994 (Karim and others 1996 p. 127). Nutritional surveillance would indicate communities that could be considered vulnerable, suggesting a general need for food deliveries but not a precise quantity of food required. The use of FEA was a clear improvement in the latter respect (p. 134). But because FEA was now virtually the exclusive methodology for WFP's food needs assessment in the Southern Sector, and because food aid channelled through WFP was easily the largest form of aid there, it played a very large part in representing the general humanitarian state of affairs to donors and other agencies. From 1994 to 1997 FEA helped paint a picture of a humanitarian situation

which was manageable in a cost-effective way, through expert measurement of local deficits and then correlative deliveries of well-targeted food. Such a scenario fitted well with a classic public administration model of good husbandry of funds through the alliance of bureaucracy with expertise (Rose 1991 pp. 688-690).

This was not altogether the way the system worked, however. As described in Section 5.2 above, the overall quantities of food available were determined mainly by other actors and processes. And despite the fact that the main application of FEA was seen to be the targeting of food aid (SCF Policy Development Unit 1996; Boudreau and Coutts 2002), food economy assessments had in practice only a limited bearing on the matter (Interview 2005c). Section 5.2.1 has shown how the size of required relief intervention was subject to unreliable estimates of the population in any locality, and the ability of relief distributions to target the most needy. The locations of relief delivery and quantities delivered could also be affected by contingencies of reserve food stocks, field staff deployment, aircraft availability, access security and permissions, timetabled commitments and events elsewhere. Besides all this, food economy assessors were conscious that relief food distribution was usually not the ideal way of meeting the needs that they had identified; but while people's household budgets might have been better assisted by provision of non-food items, social services or cash, relief food was the resource most likely to be available with which to respond. Given their weak influence, some field food economists developed a purist view of their craft; they came to see their work as descriptive rather than prescriptive (ibid.).

In view of the poor fit between the apparent or avowed role of the FEA and the reality of the food delivery system, one may – in the spirit of Foucault's (1977 [1975]) examination of the prison system – ask what other purposes the FEA served. In several ways it conferred the unofficial benefits of expertise on bureaucracy that have already been outlined in general terms in Section 4.5.2. The most important ones here are credentialization and decoying. Even though the assessment data that FEA produced may only have been marginal in *determining* particular relief allocations, it was important for *rationalizing* them. In other words, after taking into account all the other constraints, managers could choose between limited alternatives on the basis of this data, and refer to the FEA activity when justifying their decisions. The mere existence of an assessment system with some prestige helped to legitimize the whole food aid

process and draw attention away from the political factors that conditioned it. Deng's criticisms of the FEA, discussed in Sections 4.4 and 5.2, exemplify fire being drawn away from deeper political factors. The sheer amount of information generated by the FEA was intimidating despite or because of the fact that – as Deng (1999 p. 99) points out – it was hard to analyse and digest for practical purposes. All this corroborates the sense of unease conveyed by the authors of the OLS Review, who warned: 'While more information on access to food has undoubtedly led to better assessments of food aid needs, it has also led to an unrealistic confidence in the food economy approach' (Karim and others 1996 p. 128).

It was important that FEA produced food aid requirements which appeared doable. The terms 'realistic', 'unrealistic' and 'credibility' were often used about the size of funding requests, despite the fact, explained at length above, that there was a severe shortage of conceptual standards and reliable information by which anyone could judge objectively what needs were real or true. Presumably the words often indicated a scale of magnitude that donors and others felt was in line with usual resource levels and patterns of allocation in other emergencies that appeared similar. However, it can be said that FEA provided a relatively conservative view of needs. Firstly, as described in Section 5.2.1, it measured deviations from a recent and local historical norm of subsistent economic activity rather than from universal standards of human well- or ill-being. Secondly, it was susceptible to an open-ended project of discovering more about the coping-strategies of people under economic stress (Deng 1999 pp. 98-99). This endeavour was in many ways admirable but its open-endedness gave a great deal of freedom to donors who wanted to believe that estimated needs were over-stated. Nevertheless, thirdly, its ability to produce explicit and reasonably authoritative statements of percentage food deficits meant that enough credible numbers were supplied to allow the OLS-CAP machine to rumble ahead in its quasi-methodical way, even though the numbers were to be mutilated, and though the system made little provision for a big surprise, such as was to occur in Wau in January 1998.

The OLS Review team considered that WFP's 'decision to focus assessments on measurable outcomes such as food deficits and malnutrition rates has meant that "technical" aspects of food insecurity have been separated from their underlying social and political causes in the context of internal warfare' (Karim and others 1996 p. 126).

The FEA was able to work in the absence of a system of contingency planning (see Section 2.6). Probabilistic consideration of risk was not systematically incorporated into the needs assessment process. This was doubtless partly due to the fact that it would have been hard to find space for this within the Consolidated Appeal format, and would have required extra analytical capacity. It is notable in relation to the FEA in particular that while the methodology in principle made central use of a computer program conceived as a 'risk mapping' tool (Allen and Holt 1995), the food economists were unable to bring the ideas of ranges of uncertainty – and their operational and financial implications – clearly into key documents such as the Consolidated Appeal.

5.4 THE 'NOT A PROBLEM OF MONEY'/'NOT A FAMINE' CONTROVERSY

The mixing of partisan actions with idealized public models of rational humanitarianism, and the contortions that this brought about, were behind a linked pair of controversies that made the 1998 Bahr al-Ghazal crisis particularly memorable in the UK. The determination of several aid agencies to resist calling the situation a 'famine' until mid-June became incongruous with pictures of starving people. It raised a storm of discussion. Opposition by SCF and others to the idea of mounting a major public appeal through the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) seemed to many not only odd but perverse. The controversy was magnified by the involvement of Clare Short, who opposed the appeal and criticized it when it was eventually launched. Short's fragile contention that contributions from donor governments had been delayed by an under-estimate of humanitarian need was only one in a cluster of implausible positions that she adopted.

Deng accounts for this odd group of phenomena as resulting from a 'breakdown in the flow of information from the field to the NGOs' headquarters in the UK [which] created a lukewarm and sceptical response on the part of some British agencies to proposals for a national appeal for the Sudan and affected the British government position, and particularly that of DFID' (Deng 1999 p. 101). Unlike the arguments of Deng that have already been discussed above, the emphasis in this statement is on miscommunication rather than incorrect assessment. But it still suggests that donor decisions are made on the basis of technical information from the field. As in the foregoing sections, it will

here be argued that flows of causality were more complicated, and largely ran in the other direction.

5.4.1 Short's commitments

Clare Short's attitude in the controversy must be understood in relation to commitments that had become important to her during the preceding year or so. She had taken office as Secretary of State for International Development in May 1997 as part of the first Labour Party government for 18 years. It was a time of high ideals and great aspirations. Nowhere more so than in her own department, which with the change of government had acquired greater independence under a minister of Cabinet rank (Vereker 2002). DFID's Permanent Secretary was an enthusiast of professionalism and 'the power of the single uncluttered purpose' (p. 140), and the new department's paramount mission was quickly established as being the reduction and eventual elimination of global poverty (p.137). This was reflected in the White Paper (DFID 1997) published in November 1997, which displayed great efforts to establish principles and work out priorities. One of its four main sections was devoted to the question of building political support for global poverty-alleviation. Another of the sections emphasized the importance of policy consistency. In relation to disasters and emergencies, there was a commitment to encouraging a 'system-wide agreement on common performance standards and a code of ethical conduct for organizations involved in humanitarian work' (p.44).

Short provided a fuller development of this last idea in her 'Principles for a New Humanitarianism' (see Section 1.2.3), which were announced at a conference about 'Principled Aid in and Unprincipled World' on 7th April. Beside the principles discussed in Section 1.2.3, there was an important emphasis on 'tackling the underlying causes of a crisis' rather than merely the symptoms (Short 1998c). Short also outlined five criteria which DFID would use to help it decide whether humanitarian agencies were working ethically or not. These reflected concern about the potential of relief work in conflict situations to do harm and to fall into other ethical traps that might cause widespread disenchantment: the kinds of problems set out in Alex de Waal's recently-published 'critique of humanitarianism', *Famine Crimes* (de Waal 1997). Among the five criteria were stipulations that agencies should not have 'hidden...fundraising motives', should

make 'all possible effort to acquire relevant knowledge and expertise', and should 'deliberate carefully before rushing to act in a particular situation' (Short 1998c).

An indication of how the principles would be applied was given by Dr Mukesh Kapila, head of DFID's newly-established Conflict and Humanitarian Affairs Department. '"We decided that the provision of aid has to be impartial, and that if you cannot get proper access, your responsibility is to say you can't do it, no matter what the suffering. We have to be able to go straight to the mouths we are trying to feed."' (Whitaker 1998). The new humanitarian principles had clearly been designed for general application in situations of relief amid conflict, but their relevance to southern Sudan was already being noted (Whitaker 1998; Dolan 1998 pp. 372-373). Since the UK was holding the chairmanship of the EU at that time, officials of DFID were presumably aware of the Dutch, Italian and German efforts (described in Section 3.4.4) to promote simultaneously humanitarian access and a peace process in Sudan. But time was running out. It happened that on the very day of the 'Principled Aid' conference the BBC aired its first television field report from northern Bahr al-Ghazal, showing people already dependent on wild foods (Dawes 1998b).

5.4.2 The DEC appeal and denial of 'famine': Exposition

The brief and evocative word 'famine' is used more freely by activists and the mass media than by professional experts who must cultivate the appearance of objectivity and precision. During March and April 1998 it was increasingly invoked in headlines to describe the threat to the people of Bahr al-Ghazal: 'Thousands at Risk of Famine in Southern Sudan' (AFP 1998b 3rd March); 'Famine Looming'(McKinley 1998 17th March); '1 Million People Face Famine in Sudan, Ethiopia' (Bond and others 1998 10th April). From mid-April it was being used in major news publications to denote a present reality: 'Aid Agencies say Sudanese Famine is Worsening' (Dufka 1998); 'Geldof Highlights Sudanese Famine' (Donnelly 1998). But amid the popular attention created by the Geldof broadcast (see Section 4.3.2) SCF was determined to present a more nuanced view. Its spokesman told journalists: '"The situation is very serious but it's not yet one of famine"' (Steele 1998b; Donnelly 1998).

On the day of the Geldof broadcast, SCF issued a substantial 'South Sudan Emergency Bulletin' (SCF 1998). While the bulletin contained many alarming details, several parts could be interpreted as reassuring. The situation in Bahr al-Ghazal was 'very serious' but 'not yet one of famine'. Increased levels of aid were called for, but the risk of mass starvation was seen as a distant.

> If the situation cannot be stabilised over the next 18 months by a coherent and systematic response then the long-term effects will be catastrophic, and there will be the pre-conditions for famine in South Sudan in 1999. (ibid.)

Meanwhile resourcing was represented as satisfactory.

> Donors are continuing to fund the airbridge and some have brought forward their contributions to assist in the crisis, providing enough funds to cover the cost of the relief aircraft for the next 3 months. (SCF, 1998 #1668)

Wishful thinking seems to have been at work here. The statement flew in the face of a WFP press release three days earlier which had reported 'a serious lack of funds for the emergency operations over the coming months' (WFP 1998c). The contradiction might partly be explicable by the lack of clarity about whether funds were merely promised or actually available for use. The three-month projection was anyway presumably based on an assumption about rates of field food delivery based on existing air transport capacity. The capacity in the Southern Sector at that moment – two C-130s and two Buffaloes – pales beside the much larger fleet that was to be agreed ten days later. However, in its emphasis on calm capability, SCF's bulletin clove to the spirit of Short's 'principles for a new humanitarianism'. The greatest urgency expressed was for delivery of non-food items, especially agricultural seed: commodities which, unlike food, SCF was itself involved in distributing. As Randolph Kent (2004b p. 6) has observed: 'Humanitarian organizations often define the response to crisis situations in terms of what they individually can do best'.

SCF's bulletin coincided not only with the Geldof broadcast but also with an important meeting of the DEC (Scott 1998a; Laurence 1998). The DEC is a co-ordination forum for major UK overseas relief charities, whose decisions to launch combined appeals on

disaster relief usually result in special broadcasts on British television, so that they gain something of the character of national events. Sudan desk officers of the member agencies were meeting to discuss whether to recommend such an appeal. The result was that five favoured it, five were neutral, and two were opposed (DEC 1998). Opposition was led by SCF, and joined by the UK chapter of Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) (ETC 1999 p. 15/35). MSF's position was perhaps influenced by the fact that it had already – as part of the international MSF alliance – begun its own appeal (MSF 1998), and under DEC rules (DEC 1998) it might have had to discontinue this in the UK if a consortium campaign had been launched. SCF's objections were argued in more detail, along the lines set out in its bulletin. As reported by the DEC secretariat, the agencies opposing the appeal asserted that, rather than widespread hunger,

> the problem is more one of chronic and endemic food shortages, with pockets of greater need in Bahr El Ghazal. They feel the primary need is to get harvest grain for sowing to the farmers in time for planting. They are also concerned about the need to keep up international pressure on the Sudan Government to allow Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) to fly aid in from Kenya. (DEC 1998)

This closely reflected the analysis of the Food Economy Manager seconded from SCF to WFP for the Southern Sector (Sharp 1998; Interview 2005a). However, the final decision about launching an appeal could not be taken by the desk officers or a poll of agencies; it had to be made by the Executive Committee previously elected by the agencies and scheduled to meet on Monday.

Over the weekend, DFID issued a press release on the threatened crisis, implicitly in response to Geldof's broadcast. Short conveyed, in accordance with her precepts, a stance of careful deliberation before rushing to act. While noting that Britain had already pledged four million pounds to the UN Appeal, the release reported her as saying that aid alone would not bring an end to the crisis, and that 'the situation had been serious for some months, and would not improve until a political solution could be reached in the war-torn region' (DFID 1998a). The matter was already in hand. '"We are supporting the international efforts to find peace"' (ibid.). Without disavowing

compassion, she conveyed a sense of lofty superiority to news cycles.[52] '"Years of civil war have heaped immense suffering on the people of Bahr El Ghazal, suffering which is only [now] being noticed by the world"' (ibid.).

When the DEC Executive Committee met, on Monday 27th , it decided unanimously – despite the majority view of desk officers – not to launch an appeal but keep the situation under review. It may be guessed that the Executive Committee was concerned to preserve a show of unity in the face of a case forcefully argued by SCF, and that it was hesitant to flout the policy vision so recently laid out by the Secretary of State. Its members accepted several of the SCF arguments:

> They feel that more and better information is needed...; pressure must be kept up on Government of Sudan (GOS) to provide free access; the UN agencies report adequate food supplies if any access given; and the main need is to provide seeds for crop sowing to prevent another lost harvest. (DEC 1998)

SCF also relayed the message about adequate food supplies to the London *Times* newspaper, which used it in a leading article on 30th April to tell its readers 'there is no famine in Sudan yet nor need there be one' (The Times 1998). In fact at that precise moment there was an acute shortage of food in Lokichoggio (see Section 3.3.2). The 'three months' supply' referred to in the article, and the three months' airbridge costs mentioned in SCF's bulletin of 24th April, seem to have referred to the 15,000 or so tonnes of food that WFP was currently reporting as 'confirmed donations' but which was not due to start arriving in Lokichoggio until mid-May (WFP 1998n; WFP/OLS-SS 1998a; 1998b).

Meanwhile, on Wednesday 29th, in parliamentary oral answers, Clare Short repeatedly stated that the problem was not one of providing relief resources, but of influencing the Government of Sudan and the other warring parties to allow aid to be delivered. Her

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[52] Short was well known for her critical view of the mass media in general. She expressed it again in parliament on 29th April when, referring to international collaboration for eliminating world poverty, she said: 'Such a stupendous and wonderful aim, which the world could achieve, is of no interest to the media.... [T]he media like crises, rows and conflict, and are not interested in great historical advances.' (Hansard 1998b).

desire was to 'use world emotion to put pressure on those two groups of people' (Hansard 1998b column 337) rather than to channel the compassion into gift-giving. 'I say that repeatedly, only so that the world knows what the problem is and applies pressure in the right place – otherwise, everyone will start to collect money, which is not where the answer lies' (ibid.). Short did refer in passing to the crisis as a 'famine', and an urgent tone was even more apparent in an article that she contributed to a newspaper that Sunday (3rd May), which stated: 'up to 100,000 in Bahr El Ghazal are starving. Another 200,000 are close to crisis' (Short 1998d). The line taken by OLS leaders at this moment was comparatively cool. The head of the Southern Sector told Reuters: '"the Bahr el Ghazal famine of 1998 is something that can and will be prevented through OLS"'. A WFP spokesperson said: '"Definitely we are not saying there is a famine....What we are saying is that we are trying to avert one"' (Scott 1998a).

The differences of view gave edge or focus to several press articles. Jeremy Laurence in the Independent asked 'Is there really a famine in Sudan?' (Laurence 1998). The Sunday Times printed a picture of a starving person above the headline 'UN food agency says there is no famine in Sudan' (Scott 1998a pp. 126-127 cited in Howe, 2003). The columnist A. A. Gill described arriving in Nairobi in May, along with a host of competing reporters and film crews, to be told by an NGO head of mission that there was no famine. His reaction might be taken to represent the standpoint of many journalists: 'I have been sent here specifically to bring back a famine. "Not a famine in Africa" isn't exactly news' (Gill 1998).

On 1st May, the DEC Executive had deliberated again, and decided again not to call an appeal yet. Its Executive Secretary was quoted as saying: '"The DEC position would change swiftly if access into Sudan could be improved"' (Scott 1998a). It was on 4th May that Kofi Annan declared the access problem solved, and made his own appeal for donations. Nevertheless, SCF's Regional Director for East Africa, Mark Bowden, was still determinedly cautious. He was quoted on 7th May thus:

> 'There are places of acute need all over southern Sudan but that doesn't mean the problems are all related. There is a lack of clarity. The media are getting into quite broad definitions of what is going on....Personally I think it is irresponsible to appeal to the public at a time when we are still trying to define the problem.' (Laurence 1998)

However the DEC Executive reversed its decision on 15th May, noting that WFP food stocks were 'worse than thought' (DEC 1998).

At this time, the BBC's Africa Correspondent, George Alagiah, was on assignment in Bahr al-Ghazal. He met hostility verging on obstruction from SCF, MSF and other agencies – apparently instigated from their London and Nairobi offices – because they thought him determined to exaggerate the severity of the crisis and inflame divisions on the question of the appeal (Alagiah 1998b; 1998a; Interview 2008). In one broadcast, Alagiah presented a scene of two boys (evoking his own sons and his love for them) in the same room as their dead mother, and contrasted this pointedly with 'the analysts in Britain who try to measure the suffering of others' and who 'carry on as if it were a precise science, as if there were an easily discernible point at which one could say: this is genuine hardship; now we should act' (Alagiah 1998b). The emotive approach was beating the scientific one at its own game. Mark Bowden when he eventually visited the area expressed himself taken aback, as he considered the information he had previously received had not prepared him for the impact of the crisis in the field (Interview 2008). The UK ambassador to Khartoum was similarly affected when visiting Bahr al-Ghazal at the end of May (DFID 1998b).

Clare Short criticized the DEC's new decision at a conference on 'Dispatches from Disaster Zones' on 28th May. She said that such appeals made people 'flinch and turn away' from the longer-term project of development in poor countries (BBC 1998f). Among the aid agency retorts to this, a Red Cross official protested that it was 'a little bit like blaming 999 crews because we have a lot of road accidents' (ibid.). Short fired back, saying the agencies were like '999 crews rattling boxes to raise funds when they don't need it to run the ambulances' (Watt 1998): a neat riposte, but not one supported well by the evidence on disaster funding. She was called on to explain her remarks in parliamentary questions (Hansard 1998a), before a parliamentary Select Committee (Wells and others 1998b) and on television (Wells and others 1998a Paragraph 19). Short also attacked the DEC appeal on the grounds that it would reduce the pressure on the SPLA to agree a ceasefire: an argument which 'baffled' the Select Committee (Wells and others 1998a Para. 57). All this attracted further press attention and debate.

It was not until 11th June that a UN agency official was prepared to go on the record describing the situation in terms of 'famine'. Significantly (cf. Section 5.2.4), this was done in the course of announcing a new increase in the number of targeted beneficiaries, and an appeal for more funds. David Fletcher, WFP's Southern Sector coordinator stated: '"What we're starting to see is the emergence of famine zones....This applies to parts of Bahr El Ghazal that are experiencing a collapse of their traditional survival mechanisms"' (WFP 1998f). SCF's programme manager for the Southern Sector remorsefully commented: '"We [perhaps meaning the aid community collectively] have failed to respond in an adequate humanitarian fashion again"' (Dawes 1998a). Amid the now-universally-acknowledged disaster, some in the press and elsewhere permitted themselves a note of triumph; 'At last, the world agrees with us: It's a famine in Sudan' (Beaumont 1998a).

5.4.3 The DEC appeal and denial of 'famine': Analysis

The dispute that occurred over 'famine' should not be understood as mainly about the correct usage of a word, or the correct matching of that word with a situation. The concept of famine was highly susceptible to contestation. This was partly due to a gap that had widened in the 1980s between academic and ordinary public conceptions of famine among people in rich liberal states. Sen (1981) had loosened its association with shortage of food; Rangasami (1985) had advocated treating it as a process even when it did not in fact produce deaths; de Waal (de Waal 1989) had shown how Western conceptions of famine were challenged by the different ways in which its supposed victims characterized their situation. Despite the many insights that such works produced, the result was not to produce a sharper definition.

The denials of 'famine' by members of WFP, SCF, MSF and others in late April and early May were academically arguable, and would have been unremarkable had they not crystallized as an expert position in defiance of a widely-held sense of appearances and practical imperative. The criteria which they put forward – such as mass migration due to food shortage (Laurence 1998 apparently briefed by an aid agency), causal linkage between different locations with acute needs (Bowden quoted in Laurence 1998), and collapse of traditional survival mechanisms (David Fletcher quoted in WFP 1998f) – were not sufficiently integrated or evidenced to be very convincing, nor to leave a clear

way for the famine-denying agencies to change their stance when it became an embarrassment.

The question is raised why they took such a hard line in the first place. A relatively fixed policy position on this was probably brought about as a result of attempts to secure unity or coordination among different actors. As mentioned in Section 4.3.2, the formula of 'famine threatened but not famine yet' appears to stem from the Geneva meeting convened by OCHA in mid-March to reconcile differences of perspective between managers in the Northern and Southern Sectors of OLS. While the latter were more familiar with the conditions in the rural areas of Bahr Al-Ghazal, those in the North were in the position of working with or under the GOS, and were currently negotiating with it on removal of the access restrictions. The question of whether OLS was delivering disproportionate amounts of aid to the rebel-held areas compared with the government-held ones was highly germane to the negotiations, so there must have been special sensitivity and scepticism about famine alarms that could prejudice this question. Additionally, there would have been fear in OLS and GOS that a cry of 'famine' would strengthen the hands of those who argued (as in Dowden 1998) that the 'humanitarian imperative' must have preference over the principle of state sovereignty, and that GOS's obstructions of OLS aid to Bahr Al-Ghazal provided reason to replace OLS in the rebel-held areas with a system of delivering aid through bilateral agreements between aid agencies and the rebel organizations. Once a formulaic understanding between Northern and Southern Sectors had been reached in an extraordinary meeting at Geneva, its elements became like mantras, and, amid increasingly frantic activity, a revision was hard to arrange.

SCF, though it was not a UN agency, was intimately connected with this debate, having introduced FEA into WFP Southern Sector and provided its Food Economy Manager. The latter was easily available for consultation with SCF officers so as to provide material for inter-agency policy discussions (Sharp 1998). But it was also important that SCF, besides working in the Southern Sector, also had a large operation in the North, where it was considered one of the international NGOs most co-operative with the

Government.[53] Shortly before the Geneva meeting, Mark Bowden had written a paper – 'The challenges facing Operation Lifeline Sudan in 1998' (Bowden 1998) – which was probably informed largely by his Khartoum office, and certainly took a Northern Sector perspective. It argued that there was currently a 'disparity of resources' in favour of the Southern Sector, and that, in the access negotiations with GOS, the international community ought to indicate that it was willing to correct this in order to avoid a possible 'collapse of the OLS framework'.

This may have been a view shared by other Western aid staff and agencies – at around this time the European Commission's Humanitarian Office (ECHO) also was expressing concern that the future of OLS was uncertain (ECHO 1998 p. 15) – but SCF is of particular interest for its well-connected place in the network of actors. Through SCF a link is evident between the 'not a famine' and the 'not a resource problem' stances. To a great extent, the organization's connection to OLS Northern Sector gave it the attitude – and its relation with the FEAU gave it the authority – which enabled it to carry the DEC policy stance for so long in the face of internal and external opposition.[54] But a price of this was that SCF committed itself to controversial positions rather explicitly and publicly. By mid-June, its contention of 24th April, that famine was only a prospect for 1999, was clearly an embarrassment, undermining its self-image of superior expertise.

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[53] SCF was, for instance, a prominent and co-operative foreign member of the Sudan Council for Voluntary Agencies (SCOVA) (AFP 1998d), an organization considered by OLS as 'closely aligned to the Government and guided by Government policy' (HCU 1998b p. 6). SCOVA's manager made a remarkable attempt to deflate the sense of crisis in early May, claiming that the UN's own survey 'put the number of people in both government and rebel-held areas [of Bahr al-Ghazal] at 185,000, of whom "not more than 10% are in need of relief"' (AFP 1998d). Even if this referred to the federated State rather than the wider region of Bahr al-Ghazal, this was still way out of line with the estimates of the ANA.

[54] SCF's claim to intellectual authority was also staked by its publication of a study on vulnerability in southern Sudan (Harragin and Chol 1998), funded by USAID and administered by SCF. During discussions over the DEC appeal, SCF presented an initial version of this report for consideration (ETC 1999 Section 5.2). The implication was this supported SCF's case, although it was a rather complex anthropological work which did not directly address the current emergency. Perhaps the complexity was supposed to be the point. But when a chapter on the 1998 famine was later added, it was critical of the slow response of field agencies and donors (Harragin and Chol 1999).

Although SCF's denial of 'famine' at the end of April was an attempt to slow down the international humanitarian juggernaut, it probably had little practical impact on the overall crisis response. By that time, the juggernaut, though still far from its destination, had gathered a great deal of momentum. SCF's conservatism evidently tipped the scales of DEC decision-making enough to delay the UK public appeal by two or three weeks, but the funds raised by that appeal were small in the overall scheme of things: perhaps one percent of the total response to the emergency (ETC 1999 Section 12.1). Moreover, the publicity generated by the controversy did a lot to increase the awareness of the British public about the crisis in Sudan.

The controversy of April and May is less significant for its effect on decisions made at that time than as an indication of agency attitudes in the crucial months of February and March. It suggests that the willingness of European states to negotiate humanitarian access over a prolonged period without committing aid funds had been supported by confidence that the human risks of the crisis were technocratically manageable. The aspiration to sustainable disaster management had created incentives for agencies to develop and project an expertise that promised to deliver it. But technocratic expertise proved a dangerous thing in the highly-politicized environment. Northern Sector worries that Southern Sector famine-cries would unbalance OLS led to such cries being discounted. Ironically, the language of neutral expertise and managerialism muffled the early warnings.

5.4.4 Short's focus on access not resources

Clare Short had not tied herself to rejection of the 'famine' word; but she got into difficulties while stubbornly insisting through May, June and July that the humanitarian problem was one of access rather than aid resources, despite a wealth of testimony from the field agencies and others that supplies and air capacity were scarce (Beaumont and Mills 1998; Wells and others 1998a).

Short was determined to link the question of humanitarian response to that of the war. In Parliament on 29th April she announced that the UK, in its capacity as EU president, was calling for an immediate ceasefire (Hansard 1998b p. column 331). As has been pointed out in Section 3.4.4, this call functioned largely as a way of winning

concessions on humanitarian access from GOS. But the act of bargaining could not be acknowledged publicly. Instead, she explained the need for a ceasefire in terms of humanitarian logistics. 'To get food to people...through air drops is slow and difficult. If there were a ceasefire, lorries could be used to move in much more food much more quickly' (Hansard 1998b pp. 337-338). Whether such lorries were to come from the north or the south, this seriously mistook the nature of the roads in and around Bahr al-Ghazal, especially seeing as cross-line and seldom-used rural roads were landmine risks, and the rainy season was just beginning.[55] On 3rd June she referred to a different means of land transport: 'Ideally, there should be a ceasefire so that a trainload of food can get to everyone who needs it in that large area' (Hansard 1998a). But in practical terms the railway was even more problematic than the roads (see Section 2.2.3), especially considering that the aid would require intermediate storage at the rail drop-off point, and onward transportation in order to get to remote rural areas. Oxfam's International Director called her 'dangerously out of touch' (Beaumont and Mills 1998). Nevertheless, in the Parliamentary Select Committee on 24th June, Short reiterated: 'What we really need to do is get behind the corridors of tranquillity and get massive access and to get very big quantities in' (Wells and others 1998b Question 14).

This logistical imperative was driven by a ceasefire agenda rather than the other way round. The EU ceasefire-call, while pleasing GOS and thus contributing to the access breakthrough in early May, had not been accepted by the SPLM/A at the time of the IGAD peace talks. But the UK government evidently considered it had a mandate and responsibility to follow through. Perhaps it wished to build on the New Labour success story of April's Good Friday peace agreement in Northern Ireland. GOS in June rejected the idea of a joint initiative of the IGAD Partners' Forum, but accepted a bilateral mission from the UK (OLS 1998b). A British Foreign Office minister, Derek Fatchett, travelled to Sudan and Kenya in July, and, together with the Kenyan president, succeeded in negotiating the ceasefire for the worst-affected parts of Bahr al-Ghazal and Upper Nile (Al-Alaily 1998; Economist 1998a). The success took many by surprise, but the SPLM/A's acquiescence was facilitated by the outbreak of the Eritrean-Ethiopian

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[55] In one of the very few serious attempts to supply northern Bahr al-Ghazal by road, Christian Aid attempted to deliver 22MT of high-energy foodstuffs to Twic County in relatively small trucks, but failed and had to offload in Rumbek (Collison 1998).

war which, by destroying the Frontline States alliance, had turned the balance of military advantage in Sudan.

Fatchett's professed aim for the ceasefire was indeed 'to improve the humanitarian situation and to allow OLS to possibly open new humanitarian corridors' (OLS 1998b). The idea of 'humanitarian corridors' or 'corridors of tranquillity' – land routes crossing battle lines – echoed the OLS agreements of 1989, 1993 and 1994. But its lack of direct applicability in the 1998 situation made it pointless to retain this emphasis; in the event, no major changes of aid modality were included in the ceasefire agreement. Because of the rainy season there was no possibility of making additional truck routes (OLS 1998c) so the vast majority of the relief continued to be delivered by air. This does not mean it had no humanitarian value. It probably did inhibit militia and bombing attacks on the afflicted population, and reduce the security-related disruptions of the relief-operations at various sites (Bond and others 1999 p. 47). Moreover, the ceasefire was renewed in one form or another for a further two years (El-Affendi 2001 p. 592), and may be considered as part of the foundation for the long peace process that eventually bore fruit in the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement between GOS and the SPLM/A (see Section 6.5 below). But this long-range effect is not what was advertised at the time.

Short's dogged insistence that the humanitarian problem was one of access rather than donor resources should be understood in relation to this ceasefire project of the UK government. It was where the most distinctive and creative thrust of policy lay, even if the linkage with immediate life-saving was slender. It was in line with the New Humanitarian principle of approaching the underlying causes of the crisis rather than merely the symptoms. But however beneficial it may have been in the longer run, it hardly bore on the central question of relieving the famine. By the time that Short came under public pressure on the matter, there was much to be said for the argument that mobilizing donor resources was a relatively easy task; as Chapter 3 has argued, the main constraint on the operation had now become the difficulty of gearing up quickly. But it was too late. The really harmful shortage of donor funding had occurred before May. Short was now using the New Humanitarian emphasis on achieving a ceasefire partly to distract attention from this fact. But it did not convince agencies and journalists who had already seen that resource levels had been a major problem.

It is true that the UK had been almost alone among donor states in reacting to the UN's consolidated appeal in February, but this had perhaps been more a display of superiority than a mark of commitment to urgent relief. A DFID official at the Select Committee hearing recounted:

> We made a pledge as soon as the appeal was issued in February in order to ensure that we were first in line, we were the first donor and that the appeal had funds in order to begin their work and their planning for the April to October period. (Wells and others 1998b Question 24)

It does not appear that the UK used its leadership position as EU president to encourage other European states or central institutions to join in the effort.

5.4.5 Coherence and New Humanitarianism elsewhere in Europe

This section has dealt mostly with actions of the UK government and British NGOs. Before leaving the episode, it is worth noting that New Humanitarian-like attitudes were also evident more widely in Europe. As shown in Section 3.4.4, several European states were clearly working in co-ordination over negotiations with Khartoum on peace and humanitarian access between February and May 1998.

Prominent among these was the Netherlands. The Dutch had been strongly behind the IGADD peace talks in 1994, and continued to lead the advocacy of a neutral peace process afterwards, with support especially from Scandinavian countries but in opposition to the more aggressive containment policy of the US and Frontline States (van Baarsen 2002 p. 9). Meanwhile, the Netherlands had given OLS 'almost unconditional' (p. 62) financial and moral support up to 1996. But when the major OLS Review (Karim and others 1996) was presented and discussed among donors, the Dutch became more critical. They were active in the debate about the problems of OLS structure (on which they broadly agreed with the Review), and the kind of aid OLS should be providing (on which they disagreed) (van Baarsen 2002 pp. 61-64). Under the veteran Minister for Development Cooperation, Jan Pronk, Dutch humanitarian aid was progressively being directed to a more complex array of objectives, including rehabilitation and peacebuilding, rather than immediate life-saving (Macrae and Leader

2000 p. 3). Pronk was taking a lead internationally in advocating the need for the coherence of relief with development and other policy goals (ibid.). This preoccupation was linked with an aversion to crisis response; as the 1998 famine developed, Pronk was reported saying that 'the donors could not be expected to go on paying for man-made disasters' (Economist 1998a). France, Germany and Italy, though less articulate about aid policy than the Dutch, on the whole shifted the emphasis of their engagements with African states from the purely humanitarian toward the political during the three years after the 1994 Rwandan genocide (Brusset 2000 pp. 145-146).

Developmentalism was a key discourse at the level of EU institutions too. Both of the relevant EU donor departments – the European Commission Humanitarian Office (ECHO) and the Directorate General for Development (DG VIII) – had reduced their food aid to Sudan since 1994 (Duffield and others 1999 pp. 41-45). This trend was supported by rhetoric about promoting self-sufficiency and not creating dependency, despite plenty of evidence that in large parts of the Transitional Areas and South, malnutrition levels were extremely high, and that the war was making it rather difficult for people to earn their own means of sustenance (ibid.). With regard to the Northern Sector in 1997, the Brussels headquarters of DG VIII and ECHO turned down requests by field agencies for food supplies without even consulting the EU delegate in Khartoum, on the grounds that Sudan was exporting sorghum (p. 44). It seems likely that stories of SPLM/A relief diversion were exerting a similar discouragement to donorship in the Southern Sector. The European Commissioner for ECHO, who attended the conference on 'Principled Aid in an Unprincipled World' in April 1998, was attempting to hold conflicting objectives together in a kind of doublethink.

> For Emma Bonino...lives should be saved at all costs but aid can be withdrawn when the security of the 'international fire-men'...is at risk. This 'confrontation of principles' offers, she believes, a form of political leverage which should not be discounted.... (Dolan 1998 pp. 372-373)

The question of staff safety was thus being seized as way of articulating the rhetoric of the sanctity of life with the reality of pursuing other goals.

5.5 CONCLUSION

The question with which we began Chapter 4 – 'Was the lateness of donation partly caused by inadequacy of information about the impending crisis?' – must be answered affirmatively but with a sense that the terms in which it is framed are themselves inadequate. The last two chapters have undermined the implication of the question, that donations were determined by decision-makers on the basis of purely technical studies. It is truer to say that liberal state donors were already deeply involved in the production of the warning information, both directly and in the creation of expectations and institutional systems that constrained the kinds of thing that could be said. Not all of this would have been highly-conscious. Much was going on in the borderlands of structural determination: natural-seeming consequences of ways of doing things that were becoming habitual and institutionalized but were not beyond the scope of being overridden and challenged by responsible individuals.

6 CONCLUSIONS AND RELEVANCE

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This concluding chapter begins with a recapitulation, showing how the initial question has been answered in the course of the thesis. The answer then becomes a platform for extending some of the findings. In a general sense, the thesis is tackling the question of the responsibility of rich liberal states as humanitarian donors. Some clarification is offered in Section 6.3 about the ethical and rhetorical interpretation of this theme. After that, a synthesis is made of the discovered ways in which apparent failures of humanitarian information serve donors' political requirements. A final major section indicates how this functional dysfunction is relevant in more current contexts: first in South Sudan specifically, and then for the emerging system of sustainable disaster governance worldwide.

6.2 RECAPITULATION: WHERE THE MAIN QUESTION LED

The question that this thesis set out to answer was of whether much of the suffering and death in Bahr al-Ghazal in 1998 can fairly be attributed to a failure of the traditional donor states to supply adequate humanitarian funding. The investigation has proceeded by stages. Chapter 2 found that many lives could have been saved, and much suffering alleviated, if larger quantities of relief aid had been distributed between February and mid-year 1998. This is so despite the fact that the SPLM/A and other local powers were diverting significant quantities of relief away from the weakest famine victims. Indeed, it is partly *because of* that fact. Given the foreign agencies' inability to manage accurate targeting of aid, a glutting of the market would have been the most practical way to ensure trickle-down of relief benefits. Moreover a higher level of resourcing for the relief operations in the previous years would have improved OLS's readiness for such a turn of events. It would have increased surge capacities, hence enabling sensible contingency planning. And a less parsimonious attitude to relief would have created space for greater realism and better problem-solving about the working of distributions.

Chapter 3 showed that the late arrival of relief supplies was due in large part to the late commitment of donations. GOS flight restrictions were also an important obstacle to relief, but donor states failed to use the period of acute restriction before April 1998 to supply the funding that OLS needed to begin scaling up its operations. And they were slow to respond in April when the restrictions were eased. Solid donor commitments at this time would also probably have made it easier for OLS to gain the permits for additional aircraft. The chapter argued that both the donation delay and the flight restrictions were partly caused by a US government policy of putting military pressure on GOS, and that this phenomenon was obscured – and hence assisted – by the dominance of a hawkish narrative which focussed on the delinquency of GOS, the weakness of the UN, and the need for tougher action.

Chapters 4 and 5 addressed the question of whether the lateness of donation was a failure of the governmental donors rather than of the field agencies that were expected to supply early warning and needs-assessment information. By assembling the catalogue of warnings, a strong case has been made that these should have been sufficient from a humanistic point of view. That is to say that by February 1998 enough evidence had been provided of acute risk to a large number of people, and of low levels of field resourcing, to convince a humane and independent individual of the need for an urgent and abundant donor response. There is reason to think that the warnings were ignored largely because of contrary political motives on the part of traditional donor states. The US was evidently reluctant to fund OLS because of its deference to the sovereignty of the Khartoum regime. Alongside the US's belligerent anti-GOS stance, the UK government and other European actors were enthralled by recent agendas – New Humanitarianism and aid coherence – which, while not disputing the importance of saving lives at immediate risk, gave more freedom to parsimony and the prioritization of other goals.

It is true that the advance information was imperfect in content and presentation, and it is easy – perhaps too easy – to imagine that this hindered bureaucrats from processing it effectively. But this does not let donor states off the hook. The imperfections of the information have been shown to result largely from contextual conditions created by the donors. GIEWS and FEWS could not work properly as early-warning systems because

they had been made subservient to a model of sustainable governance (CAP-OLS budget-planning) rather than one of sensitive reaction to disaster. The insistence of donors in the IASC that Consolidated Appeals should be made on the basis of doable projects – rather than of human needs as such – made disasters amenable to management through annual budgets, but also laid a foundation for marginalizing the perception and measurement of people's needs. Downward pressure on the budgets exerted by donors in the years leading up to 1998 led to conservative conceptions of what needs estimates were 'realistic'. Although procedures of assessment were systematic and sophisticated in parts, these virtues were rendered almost useless by disjoints in the overall process. One disjoint was the inability to establish accurate or consensual figures. The UN agencies responded by making their working estimates invisible; and invisible meant malleable. Key concepts used when publicly quantifying the vulnerable population were indeterminate. Under these conditions, the expertise of the FEAU functioned less to inform the resource-allocation system than to provide spurious accreditation of the sustainable management model and its inbuilt assumption that contingencies could be handled smoothly. Thus, the word 'famine' was invested by some actors with an aura of technical significance which only confused perceptions of the actual relief needs.

6.3 INTERPRETING THE RESPONSIBILITY OF DONOR STATES

The focus in this thesis on the responsibility of donor states is not meant to deny the culpability of other actors. As both Rone (1999) and Deng (1999) have importantly described, the Khartoum regime played a major role in causing the famine through its war strategy of attacking, displacing and corralling the ordinary rural people of northern Bahr al-Ghazal; and the SPLM/A took scant care of the immediate bodily needs of the populations on whose behalf it claimed to be fighting. The OLS structure was cumbersome, and the officials and agencies that managed it may (for all that is publicly known) have been negligent and avoidably ineffective at many points. There was certainly a problem of transparency about the status of the operation's available funding and the supply pipeline, particularly in WFP. Some of the international agencies operational in the field were found to be ill-prepared, and co-ordination between them was widely judged to be inadequate (Macaskill 2000).

The special focus on donor responsibility amid so many possible lines of recrimination has, however, produced some important new insights about the shortcomings of relief in the 1998 Bahr al-Ghazal famine, which have wider implications for humanitarian modes of assistance and power. Above all it has shown the ease with which donor responsibility is hidden behind the apparent shortcomings of other actors: shortcomings which donors have often done a great deal to induce.

Having got so far, however, it must be admitted that the idea of 'donors' as a category of responsible actors begins to be inadequate. Already there has been a rather shifty linkage or conflation in this thesis between the ideas of 'state donors' (i.e. departments of government that are supposed to disburse aid) and 'donor states' (i.e. the wider array of governance structures and agents behind those departments). A failure to supply adequate resources for famine relief may be due to inadequacy of the officials and organizational procedures in the former; or it may more appropriately be attributed to the latter's political channelling and restrictive financing. The study has not attempted to investigate the dynamic interaction between causes at these two levels in an empirically close or rigorous way. But an analogy with the findings on the humanitarian information systems examined in Chapters 4 and 5 would suggest that the nexus of bureaucracy and expertise within donor agencies – as well as outside them – may have evolved in a way that leaves room for ulterior political priorities, despite presenting an appearance of being designed to fulfil a humanitarian mandate through technical efficiency.

Further questions might also be asked about the attribution of agency and moral responsibility within donor states. The determination of donor actions is complex but, despite the many flaws and fallacies of liberal democracy, it is still reasonable to suppose that substantial continuities exist between the actions of high-ranking officials in such states, and the self-perceived motives and interests of large numbers of individual citizens. The finding of fault with donors is partly a challenge to individuals in rich liberal states, to re-evaluate their personal political understandings and values, and to articulate them more conscientiously in public life.[56]

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[56] Public opinion polling has generally suggested little linkage between citizens' approval of foreign aid and the size of their governments' aid budgets (Riddell 2007 pp. 109-111). But the polls also suggest low

6.4 CONFLICTING MOTIVES AND THE VALUE OF DYSFUNCTIONAL INFORMATION

The slowness of the donor response to the 1998 crisis was a product of many different competing motives within donor states. 'Motives' is here used as a portmanteau term, covering interests, values and attitudes that come to bear on actions in a variety of ways. The thesis cannot map them in comprehensive detail, but has alluded to many of them in referring to governmental strategies in which they were combined. It is worth briefly reviewing this, to show the kind of flexibility that was needed for the coexistence of different motives in governmental action, and hence why the urgency of the prime humanitarian impulse created a special difficulty. This in turn leads to greater understanding of the persistent dysfunction of humanitarian information systems.

Chapter 3 (especially Sections 3.4.3 and 3.4.5) saw how the US response was governed largely by its Frontline States Initiative in the context of President Clinton's Partnership for Economic Growth and Opportunity. The latter attempted to renew the premise of the Post-World War II order, that the US would gain commercial access to the former colonies of European powers in the name of human rights and political freedoms (Brett 1985). It thus combined business opportunities and job creation for domestic constituencies with the vision of democratization as a boon for African societies (Alden 2000 pp. 361-362). But the ideology of democratization was flexible: it could be bent to mean co-operation with regimes run by the 'new generation of leaders' who appeared able to deliver relatively open economies without the most embarrassing kinds of corruption and repression. In the cases of some of Sudan's neighbours, it was especially easy to overlook their autocratic and militaristic tendencies when these were combined with antagonism to GOS. The Khartoum regime was a notable object of denunciation for human rights activists in the US, particularly some influential groups that saw themselves in solidarity with black and Christian people (de Waal 2003 pp. 217-229). GOS was also of great concern to geo-strategists as a suspected promoter of international terrorism and regional destabilization. Under this circumstance of overlapping agendas, the aggression of the Frontline States Initiative was politically tenable on condition that the extent of the US sponsorship of war remained unclear.

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levels of public understanding of aid, and a willingness to support it in principle despite belief in its ineffectiveness (pp. 111-118). It is likely that quantities of aid in the present range of variation are more directly linked to the activism of special interest groups and networks.

This ambiguity dampened attacks from both hawks (complaining that too little was being done to deal with GOS) and doves (outraged at the flouting of other states' sovereignty). It provided tactical room for manoeuvre. In the humanitarian arena, USAID's experimentation with relief to non-OLS agencies alongside OLS ones, though not particularly secret, was a way of keeping open an array of options, simultaneously sponsoring both solidaristic and neutralistic approaches.

In the terms of the New Humanitarianism, vigorous opposition to GOS could be thought of as pursuing 'durable solutions' to the 'underlying causes' (Short 1998c) of the emergency. But so could the pursuit of Sudanese peace negotiations favoured by many European states (Section 3.4.4). The consequentialist ethics characteristic of the New Humanitarianism (Slim 1997 pp. 251-252; Duffield 2001 pp. 90-93) had the flexibility to allow these different rationales. Although it might be argued that the carrot and stick strategies were functionally complementary in 1998, they were rhetorically contradictory. The contradiction was sustainable partly because of the division of role between the proponents of each approach, and partly through the lack of transparency in what was going on. Just as it was unclear how much military aid and incitement the US was giving to the Frontline States, the diplomatic process in which Europeans tried to juggle the peace process with the question of aid access was also murky.

Also being juggled was the question of the quantities and shares of aid to be distributed in GOS- and rebel-held areas. Negotiation on this matter was a delicate business because the public doctrines of aid neutrality and impartiality could easily make it look illegitimate. For the most part it seems to have been done indirectly and implicitly, as described in Section 3.4.4. But such bargaining could hardly be avoided. The reality was that the compromising of neutrality and impartiality had become a structural part of OLS. Agencies had not established a consistent practice of targeting relief accurately at the neediest people, or to preventing the warring parties from capturing many of the benefits (see especially Sections 2.6.2 and 3.4.1). This situation had been partly stabilized through a pattern of denial or functional ignorance (Section 2.6.2). It would have been impossible for field agencies and donors suddenly to start applying the principles strictly while continuing to deliver assistance. This is not to say that neutrality and impartiality had lost all meaning. Aspects of the operation could still partake of these qualities to a greater or lesser extent. When one party asserted its own

neutrality and impartiality, and accused another of violating these principles, it was doubtless arguing about relative degrees of compliance, even though it was using the traditional absolutist language of humanitarian morality. Short of acceptable nuanced terms, the dialogue was opaque. But inability to specify degrees of adherence had the virtue of flexibility. Interlocutors could form their own views about acceptable levels of neutrality and impartiality in view of possible trade-offs with other considerations.

High among these other considerations was financial cost. 'Consideration', though, is perhaps too strong a word. The effect of the CAP and attendant technologies like the FEAU was to institutionalise parsimony as an organizing principle, but defer decision-making on money until the end of the process. Disbursement was something to be formally decided only after all the assessments and evaluations, and the resolution of the apparent problems. Yet the problem-solving took place against a background of resource scarcity. The linkage of the access question with that of ceasefires and peace talks, seems to have been motivated partly by a habit of frugality. As Clare Short informed the Select Committee:

> OLS uses mostly air access which is very expensive. It currently costs more than $1,000 to deliver one tonne of food by air. Because of the cost, donors have sought, with limited success, to increase access from the north and south by road, rail and barge. (Short 1998b Paragraph 8)

Donor unwillingness to accept high transportation costs as a legitimate corollary of getting relief to people in remote places was expressed even more starkly by one of the donors to a church-based relief consortium in 1997. In the donor's view the estimated charges for moving food relief at that time were 'immoral' (Ashworth 1999).

All these donor motives, then, were in play while the famine was emerging in early 1998. In the course of political interaction they all had to be compromised to a greater or lesser degree. Compromise required some looseness in the way that motives were combined or confronted with each other. This was facilitated by a lack of public clarity. Nowhere was this more essential than in dealing with the prime humanitarian motive of alleviating acute suffering and saving lives. It would have been unacceptable for any

donor government to be seen making a calculated decision to leave people to die for the sake of other goals. The working of normal politics depended on the non-production of clear-cut knowledge about the heightened risks of early death among people in places like Bahr al-Ghazal.

The present thesis does not assert that liberal state actors consciously sabotaged humanitarian information and its production processes. It has, however, uncovered a pattern of persistent dysfunction in the production of humanitarian information and knowledge, and shown that this can be seen stabilizing an associated system of political interactions. The room for manoeuvre that it gave to statespeople in handling conflicting motives made for a disincentive to support reform of the information system despite its apparent defects. Aid agencies, dependent on donor funding, were tempted to collude in this obscurantism. Section 5.2 of this thesis backs up the finding in a study by Darcy and Hofmann (2003 p. 47) of 'some evidence of mutual "construction" of crisis by agencies and donors in a way that suits both their ends'.

> Given the tendency of contract-based relationships to be evaluated against contracted input and output rather than actual outcomes, there is a danger of circularity – problems are 'constructed' and 'solved' in ways that may bear little relation to actual needs. (ibid.)

It may be objected that donors had strong reason to avoid this insularity. The inadequacy of their official understanding about the impending famine and the low capacity of the humanitarian system cost them dear when they were eventually compelled by media attention and public compassion to respond with a hasty outpouring of resources and (in the case of the US in particular) an adjustment of regional policy. But a distinction may be made between short-term dynamics and long-term interests. The donor tactic accusing field agencies of 'crying wolf' (see Sections 4.4.2 and 4.7) was one that suggests a short-term perspective, not getting to grips with the significance of underlying trends in livelihoods and the concept of risk. The CAP's framework of annual budgeting did not make provision for lengthy planning horizons. Pursuit of efficiency through donor parsimony seems to have produced a vicious circle in which systems were insensitive not only to the emergence of famine, but also to their own insensitivity.

6.5 CURRENT RELEVANCE

How far is this analysis of the inter-relation of power and knowledge in the 1998 famine response relevant to the humanitarian system more generally? Much of the political science literature of such aid sees it as structurally and chronically dysfunctional, or rather as committed to functioning for the benefit of aid-giving organizations rather than disaster victims. Often this point is expressed in general and abstract terms, almost taking the form of a universal law. Thus Hannah Arendt in her exposition of the politics of pity writes:

> [W]ithout the presence of misfortune, pity could not exist, and it therefore has just as much vested interest in the existence of the unhappy as thirst for power has a vested interest in the existence of the weak. (Arendt 1990 p. 89)

Giorgio Agamben, interpreting 'humanitarianism' in a narrow sense, applies the argument thus:

> Humanitarian organizations…can only grasp human life in the figure of bare or sacred life [i.e. people stripped of political and social attributes so that they are merely biological beings], and therefore, despite themselves, maintain a secret solidarity with the very powers they ought to fight. (Agamben 1998 p. 133)

Jenny Edkins (2000) makes a similar case, though representing 'modernity' – rather than 'pity' or sovereign power over 'bare life' – as the active principle. Since 'famines are produced by and symptomatic of modernity' (p. xv), the modern 'technology of humanitarianism' (p. 158) can only fail, and reproduce its own failure through supposedly new-and-improved technical solutions (pp. 129-159). This chimes with Mark Duffield's dictum (explored in Section 2.6.2) that '*the aid technocracy is structurally incapable of understanding the situations in which it works*' (Duffield 1996 p. 189).

These law-like assertions – or at any rate their preoccupations with the deeper structure of world politics – are far from being shared by all. A large literature, straddling the aid community and academia (for which the journal *Disasters* may be taken as a token), implicitly takes as its starting-point the belief that relief-giving can be improved. Some

of the most critical authors, such as Keen and de Waal adopt this premise, even as they expose chronic and structural defects or contradictions in humanitarianism (Keen 1994 p. 237; 2008 p. 140; de Waal 1997 p. 217; Edkins 2000 p. 147). The present thesis does so too.

The thesis' criticism of donor parsimony implies that better outcomes could have been achieved for disaster victims if more resources had been available for humanitarian relief. It does not imply that such resources would *inevitably* achieve this. It certainly does not involve an assertion that anything like the present humanitarian complex can solve famines or extricate itself from complicity in the global power structures that cause or allow many to suffer. Humanitarianism distinguishes itself from development by the high value it places on short-term mitigation relative to long-term solutions. In the larger perspective, the point of the criticism is not to declare a negative item within a comprehensive system of moral accounting. Rather it is to describe inconsistency on the part of donors who espouse humanitarian values, and to uncover some of the systematic ways that such inconsistency is sustained: in other words, to clarify a pattern of discursive power. In this way, the thesis contributes analytical detail which may modify or be incorporated in more ambitious theories of global domination.

But more than a decade has passed since the principal events analysed in this thesis. In several respects the situation in South Sudan might seem to have changed for the better, and there have been ostensible improvements in the working of humanitarianism in that country and worldwide. This apparent progress challenges the relevance of what the thesis has found in relation to the 1998 famine. The final sections below set out the challenge in more detail, and show how the thesis' findings can nevertheless still be applied. Indeed, they show how these findings can be used as tools to deconstruct the optimism inherent in mainstream humanitarian discourse.

6.5.1 Change and stasis in South Sudan

In southern Sudan, donor resourcing of humanitarian operations has never again been so restricted as it was at the start of 1998 (see Table 7 below).

Table 7: Consolidated Appeal amounts requested and received, 1997-2009

Year	Sudan Consolidated Appeals			All Consolidated Appeals		
	Amounts requested (US$m)	Amounts received (US$m)	Percentage covered	Amounts requested (US$m)	Amounts received (US$m)	Percentage covered
1997	121	49	41	1,522	1,006	66
1998	206	314	152	2,163	1,301	54
1999	205	198	97	2,444	1,869	76
2000	132	107	82	2,143	1,258	59
2001	252	156	62	2,892	1,564	54
2002	275	174	63	4,375	2,952	67
2003	263	195	79	5,218	3,958	76
2004	727	554	76	3,417	2,197	64
2005	1,910	1,022	53	5,979	4,021	67
2006	1,595	1,071	67	5,061	3,382	67
2007	1,368	1,104	81	5,142	3,719	72
2008	2,005	1,405	70	7,088	5,085	72
2009	2,111	1,483	70	9,713	6,914	71

Sources: Porter (2002 pp. 74-77), OCHA Financial Tracking Service (www.ocha.unog.ch/fts)

The famine itself helped produce this change. The belated surge of relief funds in 1998 left OLS agencies in a 'strong financial position' at the start of 1999 (OCHA 1999 p. 25), able to improve their infrastructure and preparedness, and to provide more help for vulnerable populations. The public attention attracted to Sudan brought about an immediate change in the tenor of relations between OLS and its donors. Before the famine, donors had adopted a posture of stern discipline toward OLS, through a process of monitoring its responses to the recommendations of the OLS Review. But afterwards OLS was emboldened to declare this process compete, mentioning its 'concerns about increased donor micro-management of the operation' (OLS 1999a p. 5).

At the same time, the famine seems to have contributed to a more sustained and coordinated policy engagement on Sudan among rich liberal states, centred on the idea of finding an end to the conflict. Rather than withholding relief aid on the grounds that it had become part of the war, donors tended more to link it to active strategies for

peace. The Fatchett ceasefire described in Section 5.4.4 was one example of this approach. Another was a by-product of Kofi Annan's May 1998 access talks. Annan secured agreement for a humanitarian assessment mission to the Nuba Mountains (OCHA 1999 p. 24). This was a region which had been excluded from OLS and which presented a key problem for any overall peace agreement because, while the SPLM/A had a strong presence there, the area was historically considered part of northern Sudan. Although the fulfilment of this mission was long-postponed, Annan's agreement helped pave the way for an internationally-monitored humanitarian ceasefire in the Nuba Mountains in 2002, which in turn was an important step on the road to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between GOS and the SPLM/A in 2005 (de Waal and Abdel Salam 2003 pp. 240-245; Woodward 2006 pp. 120-133).

A key factor in this progress was a modulation of US relations with Sudan, bringing them more in harmony with the kind of constructive engagement practised by other rich liberal states (Cockett 2010 pp. 156-167). The collapse of the Frontline States strategy in 1998 helped clear the way for this. So did changes of domestic leadership on both sides: the 2000 marginalization of the ideologue Hasan al-Turabi in Khartoum (Zahid and Medley 2006 pp. 698-701) and the 2001 replacement of Bill Clinton as US President by George W. Bush. Although the US maintained a show of continued threat – notably through its August 1998 missile strike on Khartoum and its enduring refusal to remove Sudan from its list of state sponsors of terror – pragmatic cooperation became possible on matters of peace and security. The Sudanese intelligence services were reportedly helpful to the CIA in the aftermath of 9/11, and President Bush's Special Envoy to Sudan in 2001-2 managed to re-establish a credible and active role for the US in the peace process (de Waal and Abdel Salam 2003 pp. 240-245; Lusk 2004; Woodward 2006 pp. 120-133).

The joint investment of donor states in the process, and the signing of the CPA, resulted in much larger flows of humanitarian and development aid to southern Sudan. As Table 7 shows, the Consolidated Appeal of 2009 generated about 30 times more money (in terms of US dollars not adjusted for inflation) than had the one of 1997. A large part of the additional funding was due to the war and humanitarian catastrophe that blew up in Darfur in 2003, but the component of humanitarian aid for southern Sudan increased tenfold on its own account (OCHA 1998a; UN and Partners 2009 p. 12). Meanwhile

OLS was formally discontinued, although the division between the Northern and Southern Sectors persisted in a modified form, as aid agencies in the South became regulated by the interim Government of Southern Sudan rather than directly from Khartoum.

In some ways the information system for humanitarian management has improved over this period. The enormous worldwide expansion of internet use is reflected in the development since 2003 of the United Nations Sudan Information Gateway (www.unsudanig.org), dedicated, in the words of its homepage tagline, to 'serving the information needs of the humanitarian community in Sudan'. Online access has made many of the key documents far more easily accessible. OCHA has created a Financial Tracking Service (FTS, accessible at www.ocha.unog.ch/fts) which provides information on donor contributions to worldwide emergencies with an openness and consistency that was not available in 1998. Global positioning system (GPS) and linked computer software technology, together with the reduction in military sensitivity, has transformed the mapping of southern Sudan for humanitarian agencies, making possible far more comprehensively-detailed spatial accounts of needs and services. Yet despite all this, some of the same kinds of obscurity and ambiguity that this thesis has documented for 1998 (especially Section 5.2) still exist more than a decade later.

An example of this can be seen in a pair of food aid needs assessments for South Sudan published in February 2010: a GIEWS CFSAM (Goodbody and others 2010) and an Annual Needs and Livelihoods Assessment or ANLA (WFP South Sudan VAM Unit and others 2009). WFP was involved in both, and they shared much of their basic data. But some unexplained discrepancies appeared in the analysis. Whereas the CFSAM (p. 32) reported 4.7 million food insecure people, the ANLA (p. 40) declared 4.3 million. The CFSAM estimated a cereal deficit of 225,000 tonnes (p.19) and recommended that 155,000 tonnes of this should be provided in food aid (p.34). A graph in the ANLA (p.40), however, implied that food aid should approach 190,000 tonnes. The Consolidated Appeal document for 2010 (UN and Partners 2009 p. 65) published in December had tentatively put the grain deficit at only 100,000 tonnes and had not mentioned a planned amount of food relief, speaking rather about an emergency food 'caseload' of only 1.7 million people.

It is interesting that that five years after the signing of the CPA the assessed emergency food aid requirement for southern Sudan was so much greater than the 49,000 tonnes requested in the particularly desperate war year of 1998. This is a further indication of the downward pressure on needs assessments that had been exerted by the US and other donors at that time. Admittedly, some of the recent increase may be accounted for by a greater population. Probably more significant is the existence of authoritative demographic figures. These were based on a census taken in 2008 (Population Census Council 2009). For Bahr al-Ghazal[57] the census counted 2.7 million people, a figure which approximately conforms to those adopted in the immediate aftermath of the disaster (see Section 5.2.1). Back in 1998 such data would have made it difficult for donors to avoid much higher relief commitments.

Although the political situation today thankfully allows more generous aid in southern Sudan, room for manoeuvre in needs-definition has been maintained by bureaucrats. The food economy approach, which dealt relatively directly with the size of the food deficit at its sampled locations, is no longer in use. The current ANLA methodology is based on formal questionnaires, and so makes a greater separation between the collection and the analysis of data. It focuses on establishing the proportions of people in each area classified as 'food secure', 'moderately food insecure' and 'severely food insecure' (WFP South Sudan VAM Unit and others 2009 pp. vii-x). Whether and how this generates the overall relief food requirement is not explained. Not that it would be easy to explain; the matter is certainly a complex one requiring intelligent judgment rather than an automatic procedure. But it is also potentially controversial. It would impinge, for instance, on the role of agricultural policy in the peacetime economy of southern Sudan, and the extent to which food support is being required to stand in for other forms of aid.[58] Avoidance of these politically-awkward topics is facilitated by consigning them to a realm of expertise that does not fully have to explain itself.

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[57] By 2008/9 Bahr al-Ghazal was divided into four states: Lakes, Western Bahr El Ghazal, Northern Bahr El Ghazal and Warrab.

[58] Food aid made up 49 per cent of contributions to the 2009 Sudan appeal (FTS 10th July 2010). It was evidently easier to obtain than other forms of aid; the Food Security and Livelihoods sector (in which food aid was preponderant) received a higher proportion of its request than did any other sector (UN and Partners 2009 p. 19). The relative shortage of non-food assistance has long been recognised as a problem worldwide (Barrett and Maxwell 2005 p. 235).

At the same time, WFP and its partners still short-circuit the connection between 'vulnerable' or 'food insecure' people and the beneficiaries of food aid. In the 2009/10 ANLA these two groups are implied to be identical. Having quantified the number of food-insecure people as 4.3 million, the report says that some 4.3 million will be assisted by WFP (WFP and others 2010 p. 40). Yet the figure had been obtained by analysing questionnaire results to produce the proportions of food insecure people within sampled communities, and then extrapolating these proportions over wider geographic areas. There is no account of how the food insecure can accurately be targeted as recipients of food aid on such a scale.

As soon as this problem is stated the idea of the assumed correlation becomes implausible. But the problem is not allowed to emerge very much. One occasion on which it almost did so was the end-year report on the 2006 UN and Partners Workplan (UN and Partners 2007). 'Workplan' is the name given to the main annual Consolidated Appeal document in Sudan after 2004, in order to emphasise its role as a tool of management as well as fundraising. This aim was pursued by relating all proposed projects to sectoral and regional goals, and formulating indicators and targets against which these were to be monitored. With regard to the main food aid objective in southern Sudan the 2006 report admitted that the quantity of relief food had been 25 per cent less than planned while the number of beneficiaries had risen, and explained:

> In the absence of registration and an effective targeting system in place, in several areas, the number of people (returnees, IDPs and vulnerable residents), who turned up at the distribution centers to receive food were more than the number planned for assistance. To avert security incidences which could harm beneficiaries at these distribution points, the same amount of food planned for distribution were often shared and distributed to more people than planned. (UN and Partners 2007 p. 74)

The fulfilment of each target in the Workplan had to be summarised as 'fully achieved', 'partially achieved', or 'not achieved'; this one was brazenly labelled 'fully achieved'.

The potential for the logical framework discipline to expose contradictions between realities and success-claims seems to have made its rigorous application unsustainable. The public Workplan report for the following year (UN and Partners 2008) took a drastically simpler form – a bland summary – and no end-year reports on achievement of Workplan targets for later years are listed in the Workplan's website[59]. The logical framework was nevertheless retained as a design feature and a coordination tool in appeal documents. Resistance to detailed scrutiny was strong. In 2008, when I participated in an evaluation for the UN in Sudan of the Food Security and Livelihoods Sector (Zaki and Gerstle 2008), I frequently asked WFP officials for food aid distribution reports, but did not receive any that could form the basis of a critical audit.

This situation is analogous with what pertained in the 1990s, when WFP's inability to target the neediest people met with denial and functional ignorance as described in Section 2.6.2. A structural disinclination to look closely at problematic parts of the aid process jeopardizes opportunities to help the most vulnerable people, and may be creating anew an element of future catastrophe.

It is tempting to let the blame for this rest with WFP and other field agencies. But an important implication of the present thesis is that dysfunction in systems of humanitarian knowledge is largely a product of the dependence of implementing organizations on donors who have partisan agendas, limited funds, and little accountability. Donors may re-allocate their funding according to their own priorities, but their agents are expected to maintain a display of rationality, competence and expertise in the service of humanitarian principles. It is therefore often reasonable for field workers and agencies to avoid disturbing idealized assumptions about the way assistance works. To do so would be to raise a spectre of waste and failure without much prospect of consistent donor support to address the deeper problems. It would run a real risk of scaring money away.

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[59] http://workplan.unsudanig.org/workplan.php (accessed 4th July 2010)

6.5.2 Famines and other humanitarian crises beyond South Sudan

The implications of this go far beyond South Sudan. Many of the phenomena seen there in 1998 have been echoed in subsequent food crises elsewhere. Controversy continues to recur over the crying of 'famine'. In the Ethiopian dearths of 1999-2000 and 2002-2004 WFP managed to hold the line that had been breached in Sudan in 1998; it resisted calling them 'famines' beforehand, and sanguinely classified them as 'averted famine' afterwards (Salama and others 2001; Hammond and Maxwell 2002; Lautze and Raven-Roberts 2004). Save the Children predicted and confirmed 'famine' in Malawi in 2001-2002 (Seaman 2002), but many other aid agencies refused to describe the situation in this way (Darcy and others 2003 p. 4). In Niger in 2005, MSF and the BBC led in calling global attention to scenes of acute malnutrition which many agencies and journalists referred to as famine (MSF 2005). But FEWS and others argued that they were misrepresenting a variant on a chronic state of affairs (Eilerts 2006; Wilding and Mossi 2007), and a subsequent Swedish television documentary even argued that the alarm was a confidence trick (Landes 2008).

As with Sudan in 1998, donor responses to these emergencies are in most cases reported to have been late, some observers identifying geo-political or inter-governmental causes (Hammond and Maxwell 2002 p. 276; Lautze and Raven-Roberts 2004; Rubin 2008 pp. 59-61; Darcy 2006 p. 20), and some blaming the quality of warning information and the unreliability of trigger mechanisms (Hammond and Maxwell 2002 p. 271; Seaman 2002; Oxfam 2005 p. 6). Post-event estimates of death are no less controversial. Mortality figures have been quoted of 71,600 to122,700 for Ethiopia in 1999–2000 (Salama and others 2001); 47,000 to 85,000 for Malawi in 2001–2002 (Devereux and Tiba 2007); and 13,297 to 47,755 deaths for Niger in 2004–2005 (Rubin 2009). But the basis for the Ethiopia estimate has been strongly disputed (Hammond and Maxwell 2002 pp. 267-268); many put the Malawi death toll 'in the hundreds rather than the thousands' (Ó Gráda 2009b p. 1; see also Devereux 2002 p. 70; 2010 p. 22); and a major survey in all the regions of Niger in 2005 failed to find mortality rates rising above a stated famine threshold (Reza and others 2008).

These disputes reflect a continued lack of decisive and commonly-accepted criteria for famines, and a patchiness in the performance of institutions for predicting and

identifying them (IRIN 2010). They may admittedly also support suggestions that real progress has been made in what has long (Stern 1941; Aykroyd 1975) been conceived of as humanity's task of eliminating famine. In the era of globalization the intensity of such disasters seems to have been reduced (Devereux 2000; 2002; Ó Gráda 2009a). A chronological list of famines might now put one in mind of a receding thunderstorm – in which Sudan 1998 was one of the last clear outbursts – the rumbles becoming less and less distinguishable from the background noise of poverty and violence. This apparent success has been attributed to several major factors: to economic growth and agricultural productivity keeping ahead of population increases; to the dwindling of totalitarian and colonial modes of governance; to the diffusion of electronic communications and mass media; and, indeed, to the strengthening of national and international systems of emergency aid (ibid.). However, such progress cannot be regarded as secure. The possibility of drastic climate change presents a serious challenge for aggregate world food production as well as pointing towards worse crises of livelihoods for relatively subsistent populations (Schuemer-Cross and Taylor 2009).

The political climate is perhaps even more of a risk. In the aftermath of 11th September 2001, as the 'war on terror' was being stepped up in parts of the world regarded as actual or potential havens of terrorists, President Bush told officials he was determined there should be 'no famine on his watch' (Hyde and others 2002; Landis and others 2002), an attitude which has been credited with spurring a much more energetic USAID response to signs of famine in Ethiopia in 2002 as compared with 1999 (Lautze and Raven-Roberts 2004). The Ethiopian government had become a key US ally in the containment of radical Islamism in the Horn of Africa (Prendergast and Thomas-Jensen 2007). Whether the strategic interests of the US and other rich liberal states will play out so favourably for the victims of food crises and other types of disaster in future is uncertain.

The findings of the thesis are relevant to other types of disaster too. While the evidence about people's needs in disasters – and the degree to which they are being served – remains very weak (Harvey and others 2010 pp. 5, 27-30), the endeavour of sustainable disaster governance which took off in 1991 (see Section 1.2) has continued to ramify. Global humanitarian aid increased from approximately five billion dollars in 1998 to about ten billion in 2008 (Development Initiatives 2006 p. 7; 2009 p. 2). Almost all of

this increase is reflected in the expansion of the CAP system, whose funding rose from about two billion dollars in 1998 to seven billion in 2008 (see Table 7 on page 194). Most CAP activity counts as relief, so that the CAP is now an over-aching framework for humanitarian aid. Financially it is still small by the standards of the global economy – equal for instance to less than five per cent of UK government domestic health expenditure[60] – but it nevertheless represents a significant political phenomenon: an increasingly entrenched and formalized system linking rich liberal states with parts of the world that are relatively undisciplined by the workings of government administration and formal capitalism. Whereas in 1998 the CAP covered relief work in 15 countries and country-clusters, in 2008 the number of locations reached 31.[61] And whereas in 2000 the CAP worldwide aligned the work of only 22 (mostly UN) field agencies, by 2010 the NGOs had been substantially drawn in, so that the number of participating organizations stood at 350 (Montreux Convenors 2010).

The expansion of the CAP system means that more relief is being regimented within Common Humanitarian Action Plans. Since 2005 particular efforts have been made to strengthen the role of the UN country co-ordinators in charge of these programmes (Holmes 2007). As part of the same batch of humanitarian reforms, an overlapping layer of co-ordination – the Cluster – has been established at national and international levels, grouping operational units of different organizations according to type of activity (ibid.). Meanwhile the trend has continued towards coherence of relief and development work with local and international security strategies. 'Integrated missions', usually under UN leadership (Eide and others 2005; Harmer 2008) are increasingly flanked by combined military-civilian humanitarian structures belonging to donor states, such as the US Africa Command (AFRICOM 2008) and the UK Conflict Prevention Pools (DFID and others 2008). The funding by governments of the humanitarian work of major NGOs stands at the substantial average level of about fifty per cent of their income (Development Initiatives 2009 p. 54).

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[60] UK public expenditure on health in 2008-2009 is officially reported as GBP 110 billion (HM Treasury 2010 p. 69), equivalent to approximately $165 billion.

[61] http://ochaonline.un.org/humanitarianappeal/webpage.asp?Site=2008&Lang=en accessed 26th July 2010

This intensification of administrative links between different components of the humanitarian system is augmented by continual development of quasi-professional protocols and standards. Thus the strengthened role of country UN humanitarian coordinators requires curricula for training the people to fill these roles, and revised guidelines for their interaction with other officials (Holmes 2007). A Needs Analysis Framework (NAF) was developed for the presentation of Consolidated Appeals (IASC CAP Sub working group 2005; 2007). The humanitarian community's attempts to define ethical principles in the 1990s (see Section 1.2.3) were succeeded by initiatives which embodied ethics in cannons of technique: projects such as Sphere[62], HAP[63], and ALNAP[64]. The Code of Conduct's assertion of rights to receive and offer humanitarian assistance (Red Cross and NGOs 1994 Article 1) has been further developed as a doctrine of intervention through the high-profile report on *The Responsibility to Protect* (ICISS 2001; UNGA 2005; UNSC 2005a; 2005b). More recently, there are concerted attempts to structure a global epistemic community of humanitarianism (IHSA n.d.) and to professionalise the humanitarian sector (Walker and Russ 2010).

In the field of needs and vulnerability assessment, the Food Economy Approach was turned into the Household Economy Approach (Seaman and others 2000) and is now liable to be combined with other tools and methods within the international Disaster Risk Reduction agenda (Benson and Twigg 2007; Boudreau 2009 p. 3). By 2007 the number of different branded procedures for needs assessment and analysis had grown so rapidly that OCHA was tasked to undertake an Assessment and Classification of Emergencies Project in order to map them (ACE Project 2009).

Despite all this product research and development activity, patently-inadequate disaster responses continue to happen, and inadequacy of information is still widely seen as an important cause (Darcy and others 2007; IRIN 2010; Harvey and others 2010 pp. 27-30). Humanitarian practitioners nevertheless remain optimistic that current innovations

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[62] Sphere elaborates the rights of disaster victims in terms of aid agency service delivery standards (McConnen 2000).

[63] HAP (the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership) develops best practices and accreditation to fulfil the idea of accountability to beneficiaries (http://www.hapinternational.org accessed 4th August 2010).

[64] ALNAP is the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance (http://www.alnap.org accessed 4th August 2010) .

will make a difference. At the time of writing, hopes are placed especially in the increase of collective assessment missions and the spread of the Integrated Phase Classification (IPC) system for characterizing fragile livelihood conditions (ibid.). But critical academics have pointed out that aid agency initiatives are often in the nature of skin-shedding: continual reinvention of programmes and methods in order to shrug off the taint of past failings by emphasising the latest plans (de Waal 1997 p. 143; Edkins 2000 pp. 129-152; Duffield 2001 pp. 263-264). It would be too extreme to conclude that the plethora of new initiatives can bring no improvement, but the hopes which they inspire should not be allowed to distract attention from the political conditions of which they are part.

A basic political condition is that rich liberal states are reluctant to give much for the welfare of disaster victims. What they disburse is largely wedded to partisan considerations, or at least wedded to the freedom to take partisan considerations into account. The case of Sudan in 1998, as analysed in this thesis, exemplifies a range of ways in which discourses of administrative efficiency and technical expertise within humanitarianism can partly normalise the pursuit of these other priorities and the denial of assistance.

Much of the public space for recognizing and tackling this as a problem is occupied by the Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) initiative, which provides one forum for the major liberal-state donors.[65] When launched at a meeting attended by representatives of 15 or 16 top donors in 2003, it contained hints of a vision for radical reform. An account of the meeting's conclusions – apparently drafted by its hosts, the Swedish foreign ministry – described the initiative as being founded on '[t]he common international goal of meeting the entirety of global humanitarian needs' (IMGHD 2003a). It acknowledged that '[s]erious shortcomings in the level…of response remained features of many crises' (ibid.). Some of the participants in the meeting argued that '[s]imply put, more money was needed' (IMGHD 2003b p. 7) and that the best way to ensure adequacy was through regular assessed contributions (p. 3). But at least one donor state was determined to resist any rigid new discipline or commitment on quantity of aid. The agreed declaration on 'Principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship' was,

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[65] http://www.goodhumanitariandonorship.org/background.asp accessed 15th August 2008.

in the words of two of the consultants in the process, 'watered down a little from its original form' (Macrae and Harmer 2003). It committed the donors to the aims of 'flexible and timely funding', and to making donations 'in proportion to needs and on the basis of needs assessments' (Government of Canada and others 2003). But it essentially evaded the question of increasing the amount of donation or the independence of implementation from donor state interests. In the view of a USAID official, '[t]he focus of the work was not on the 'how much' per se – how much in the way of new resources – a but rather on the 'how' – how to do better with what donors are spending' (OFDA 2004 p. 12).

The burden of the initiative was thus partly pushed back onto reforming the procedures of the implementing agencies and the governments of the afflicted areas. After the process had threatened to open a difficult politico-ethical question – how much the populations of rich liberal states were prepared to sacrifice – it was closed again in a manoeuvre which Edkins (2000 p. 103) has termed 'retechnologization'. The January 2007 GHD *Update* rather neatly reflected the attitude of the donors after four years:

> Critical to any effort to ensure that resources are allocated according to need is having a better idea of what that need is....[A] number of donors have been working together to coordinate their investments in improving the evidence base for humanitarian action. (Macrae 2007)

Since human need is an essentially contested concept, the quest for a clearer perception of needs – or a tidy procedure for establishing needs – is one that could continue indefinitely, and may be used to defer hard choices. Since 2007 the 'according to need' strand of the GHD process has involved: reviewing (inconclusively) the methods that ECHO and the Canadian government have invented for prioritizing disasters; pushing for more joined-up needs assessment processes; and studying mechanisms for financing non-UN agencies (GHD Initiative 2008 pp. 2-4; 2009b pp. 4-5; 2009a pp. 4-5).

It is true that under the GHD there have been some indications of significant improvements in donor performance. The proportion of funds allocated by GHD donors to ongoing crises in the first quarter of a year rose from 19 per cent in 2004 to 49 per cent in 2007 (Development Initiatives 2006 p. 76; 2008 p. 3). But the average funded

proportion of Consolidated Appeals each year since 2001 has remained dismally fluctuating in a band between about two-thirds and three-quarters of stated requirements (see Table 7 on page 194). Attempts to separate donations more clearly from the individual interests of donor states have borne fruit in the creation of the worldwide Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and pooled funds at country level controlled by OCHA or the UN country humanitarian coordinator (Development Initiatives 2009 pp. 61-69). But these are set against a marked decline in unearmarked contributions to individual UN agencies (p.2). Pooled funding in 2009 still only amounted to seven per cent of total humanitarian aid (Development Initiatives 2010 p. 46). The US and the European Commission have notably so far declined to provide this kind of untied assistance at all.

Even were these aggregate indications more impressive, it would be a mistake to see them as a strong sign of overall beneficial progress. All disasters have their own conditions and dynamics; their peculiarities make for dangers in standardization, whether of needs assessment procedures, management structures, or performance indicators. As a technique of power, standardization promises clarity and efficiency; but there is also power in the ways that these promises are subtly broken. The present thesis has illustrated how contingent political motives and tactics around a crisis and its response can interact with rationalistic humanitarian administration to produce effects harmful to the disaster victims.

Despite the advance of expert techniques, the equation between basic human needs and available human resources will continue to be fudged. It will be fudged by professional spin, credentialization, functional ignorance, missing links in calculations, ambiguous concepts, the decoy effect of more sophisticated agendas, the scapegoating of handy villains, and the conversion of clashing values into disputes purporting to be about technique and fact. These things allow donors to evade responsibility for the consequences of their parsimony and partisanship. Amid the growth of sustainable disaster governance, and the continuing practical difficulties of neutrality and impartiality in the field, the thesis points to the neglected importance of independence as a humanitarian principle. It highlights a need for further research on the workings of liberal state donor power in disasters, showing how this is linked with the people who

suffer and die. And it has contributed to developing the knowledge base, conceptual resources and language available for such research.

ANNEXE 1: TABLE OF FAMINE EVENTS AND CONDITIONS BY LOCATION

Table 8: Famine events and conditions by location

Note: This table, compiled from details in diverse aid agency and press reports, indicates the spatial and temporal dimensions of the famine, in conjunction with Map 2

Town/Village /Payam	County	Reported events and conditions
Abyei	Abyei	• Scene of heavy fighting between SPLA and GOS in June 1997 and January 1998 (Deng 1999 p. 42) • Relief food was sent there from the North in February 'to be prepositioned for the rainy season' (HCU 1998c). • Renewed fighting and displacement was reported in April (ibid.). • In early July, insecurity was preventing a continuous presence of OLS staff. Shelling was said to be resulting in people fleeing southwards. (ibid.) • By July it had received an influx of displaced people, who were receiving relief from WFP (WFP 1998h).
Acumcum	Wau	• OLS recorded security evacuation of its staff on 11 May 97 (UNICEF/OLS 1998b) • Location affected by Kerubino and PDF raiding. Hosted displaced populations from Gogrial since 1996. (Task Force 1998) • In early 1998 received 'large influxes' from Wau town and the SPLM counties of Gogrial, Aweil, Tonj and Rumbek. (Task Force 1998) • Bombed on 14 Feb 1998 (Rone 1999 p. 91). • In mid-February, 40% of 145 medical consultations of children showed malnutrition. (OLS 1998g) • There was tension in the area and incidents of looting, and some people moved away. Besides WFP food, SCF was involved in the distribution of relief items. MSF-B complained of a lack of general food distributions to support their feeding programme (Task Force 1998) • June: UNICEF survey found 79% of children malnourished, of which 47% severely (Duffield, Young and others 1999 p. 57). • MSF recorded extremely high CMRs in the first half of August (20-40/10,000 per day), but they fell rapidly to about 2/10,000/day in late September. (MSF Sudan 1998)
Adet	Tonj or Gogrial	• One of the four locations cleared for relief flights from 26th February, and the first location to receive air-dropped food (AFP/WFP). • Bombed on 8th February and 19th March (Rone 1999 p. 91) • In mid-March, Journalist James McKinley finds 3,500 people, many emaciated, waiting there for relief distribution (McKinley 1998) • Adet serves as an overflow distribution site from Ajiep in August (Task Force 1998 p. 42)
Agaigai	Gogrial	• OLS recorded security evacuations of its staff on 18 Sep 96, 28 May 97 (UNICEF/OLS 1998b)

Town/Village /Payam	County	Reported events and conditions
		• Attacked and looted by Nuer militias May 1997 (Deng 1999 p. 42) • Site surveyed in ANA, Sept '97: 50% of population 'vulnerable', with 25% food deficit. Includes people rendered destitute by recent insecurity.
Agangrial	Rumbek	• June: Oxfam cluster survey finds 29% of people malnourished , 6% severely(Duffield, Young and others 1999 p. 58).
Ajiep	Gogrial	See analysis in the main text at Section 2.4
Akak	Twic	• OLS recorded security evacuations of its staff on 8 Jul 96, 21 Oct 96, 20 Jul 97, • Attacked by Kerubino militia July 1997 (Deng 1999 p. 42) • One of the six locations cleared for relief flights from 19th March
Akoc	Twic	• OLS recorded security evacuations of its staff on 30 Nov 1996, 31 Jan 1997, 21 Mar 1997 (UNICEF/OLS 1998b). Bombed on 9 Feb 1998 (Rone 1999 p. 91). • Devastated by Kerubino forces, Jan 1997 (Deng 1999 p. 42) • Site of a supplementary feeding centre run by SUPRAID with support from UK govt and Christian Aid (Collison 1998)
Akuem	Aweil East	• One of the four locations cleared for relief flights from 26th February. • In-mid-March it is said to be so insecure that relief workers cannot stay there overnight (WFP 1998m)
Alongdior	Rumbek	• Reported to be one of the worst-affected locations in Bahr al-Ghazal by July 1998 (HCU 1998c)
Ameth	Twic and Aweil East	• OLS recorded security evacuations of its staff on 1 Feb 97, 22 Mar 97 (UNICEF/OLS 1998b) • Raided by PDF March 1997 (Deng 1999 p. 42)
Aweil	Aweil West	• GOS garrison town attacked by SPLM/A in 1998. Successfully defended, but much of its population displaced. • Continuing movement of people and cattle away from Aweil town was reported in mid-March (WFP 1998m). • Aweil was besieged so that no OLS staff were posted there and no relief food deliveries were possible up to mid-July. At that time 9,000 people were said to be in need of humanitarian assistance. (WFP 1998h).
Aweng	Twic	• See Wunrok
Awok	Tonj	• Scene of emotive broadcast and newspaper reporting by Fergal Keane, 3rd May (Keane 1998)
Ayien	Gogrial	• OLS recorded security evacuations of its staff on 16 Jun 97, 27 Nov 97 (UNICEF/OLS 1998b) • Attacked by Kerubino forces, June 1997 (Deng 1999 p. 42)
Ayien	Aweil West	• Site surveyed in ANA, Sept '97: 90% of population vulnerable, with 35% food deficit (a severe situation making it a top priority for assistance)
Bararud	Wau	• OLS recorded security evacuations of its staff on 12 Sep 96, 28 Dec 96, 13 Feb 97, 26 Apr 97, 7 Dec 97, 31 Jan 98, 27 Apr 98, 15 Jun 98 (UNICEF/OLS 1998b) • Site surveyed in ANA, Sept '97: 50% of population vulnerable, with 25% food deficit. Hosting displaced people from Aweil and Gogrial • Reported to be one of the worst-affected locations in Bahr al-Ghazal by July 1998 (HCU 1998c) • MSF set up SFC and TFC there by Sept 98 (MSF Sudan

Town/Village /Payam	County	Reported events and conditions
		1998)
Dhiak	Aweil East	• June: UNICEF rapid assessment survey finds 59% of people malnourished, 26% severely (Duffield, Young and others 1999 p. 57).
Ed Daein	S. Darfur	• 40,000 displaced Dinka people were reported displaced from there in April (FEAU 1998)
Gogrial	Gogrial	• GOS garrison town attacked by SPLM/A in May 1997 and January 1998. Successfully defended, but much of its population displaced.
Lietnhom	Gogrial	• In December 1999 a journalist found memories of a situation where 'the death toll was unimaginable…nobody buried the dead anymore'. (Lugala 1999)
Lunyaker	Gogrial	• One of the few sites of relief distributions in March. Trucks containing supplementary foods and non-food items reached there on 7th March. (OLS 1998h) • Reported to be one of the worst-affected locations in Bahr al-Ghazal by July 1998 (HCU 1998c)
Majakliet	Gogrial	• In late April, only 30% of 2,500 people, many, had walked for as much as four days to get relief, could be fed. Desperation resulted in a fight. (IRIN 1998e) • Reported to be one of the worst-affected locations in Bahr al-Ghazal by July 1998 (HCU 1998c)
Malwal Akon or Malwalkon	Aweil East	• OLS recorded security evacuation of its staff on 5 Apr 97 (UNICEF/OLS 1998b) • Attacked by PDF July 1997 (Deng 1999 p. 42) • Site surveyed in ANA, Sept '97: 60% of population vulnerable, with 15% food deficit (The area is charactised by displaced and moving populations) • Used as a relatively secure ground base for relief staff to stay overnight during the period when Akuem was one of the four permitted airdrop sites (OLS 1998h). • Received displaced people from *murahaleen* raiding in Aweil West, besides suffering itself from PDF raiding. (Task Force 1998) • June: UNICEF rapid assessment survey finds 30% of people malnourished, 8% severely (Duffield, Young and others 1999 p. 57).
Malwal Bai		• Reported to be one of the worst-affected locations in Bahr al-Ghazal by July 1998 (HCU 1998c)
Mapel, Kuajina	Tonj or Wau	• OLS recorded security evacuation of its staff on 9 May 97 (UNICEF/OLS 1998b). • Kuajina Payam was a scene of fighting between SPLA, GOS, PDF and Kerubino forces, Sept 1997 (Deng 1999 p. 42) • On 21st February, 20% of 85 health consultations registered serious malnutrition (OLS 1998g) • Site of one of the first deliveries of relief food: 120MT from Uganda on 22nd February (WFP 1998k). • DFID official finds 'direct evidence of starvation' there in mid-May 1998. • June: UNICEF survey of children at Mapel finds 40% malnourished, 13% severely (Duffield, Young and others 1999 p. 57). • Reported to be one of the worst-affected locations in Bahr al-Ghazal by July 1998 (HCU 1998c) • Scene of report by Al-Alaily, 23rd July, reporting many

Town/Village /Payam	County	Reported events and conditions
		people malnourished and dependent on wildfoods. • August MSF survey of children at Mapel finds 45% malnourished, 21% severely. Malnutrition rate nearly twice as high among the displaced than the residents (Duffield, Young and others 1999 p. 57). • MSF recorded extremely high CMRs there , reaching 28/10,000/day in early August, declining to 3.5/10,000/day in late September (MSF Sudan 1998). • In August the CMR was much higher for displaced people than residents, but residents were more likely to receive relief food (MSF Belgium 1998 cited in Jaspars, 1999 p. 10).
Maper	Twic	• OLS recorded security evacuation of its staff on 1 Jun 98 (UNICEF/OLS 1998b) • Had hosted displaced populations from Abiem (Upper Nile) and Abyei before 1998. Received influx from Wau and Aweil in early 1998. Twic county was experiencing a lack of water and health services following the expulsion of ACF in 1997. (Task Force 1998 p. 50)
Marial Baai	Aweil West	• Site surveyed in ANA, Sept '97: 40% of population vulnerable, with 10% food deficit. Attacked by PDF militia three times between November 1997 and April 1998, suffering looting and abductions (Yilma and Mawein 1998 p. 4). • OLS recorded security evacuations of its staff on 30 Nov 97, 24 Apr 98 (UNICEF/OLS 1998b). • June: UNICEF rapid assessment survey finds 28% of people malnourished, 7% severely (Duffield, Young and others 1999 p. 57). As an insecure spot, Marial Baai sees little relief activity, and in October, a similar survey finds rates increased to 39% malnourished, 10% severely (ibid.).
Marial Lou	Tonj	A field base of MSF-Switzerland. No general food distributions had been done by August and MSF said that this reduced the effectiveness of their existing feeding-centre, let alone the two additional ones they now thought were needed. (Task Force 1998)
Meiram	S. Kord	Reported as receiving an influx of displaced people from late May who, by July, who were receiving relief from WFP (WFP 1998h; HCU 1998c).
Nabagok/ Ngapagok	Tonj	OLS recorded security evacuations of its staff, mid-1996 to mid-1998, on 13 Jan 98 (UNICEF/OLS 1998b) This was due to conflict between World Vision and the SPLM/A/SRRA (UNICEF/OLS 1998a)
Nyamlel	Aweil West	'Hard hit' by a 'massive attack' in Aweil West by PDF militia in March and April 1998 resulting in large scale displacement within the county, cessation of agricultural activities, and large numbers of people living without shelter and resorting to wild foods (Yilma and Mawein 1998 p. 3).
Pakor	Gogrial	• Bombed on 24th February (Rone 1999 p. 91) • One of the four locations cleared for relief flights from 26th February. • In mid-March it is said to be attracting people from Twic county (WFP 1998m) • 18th Mar IRIN reports: thousands of people walking up to four days from Gogrial and Twic Counties. WFP distributed to 43,460. MSF measures 17.9% of under-fives suffering from severe malnutrition. Concern about lack of seeds (IRIN 1998c)

Town/Village /Payam	County	Reported events and conditions
		• A film shot there on 22nd March was used by OLS to publicize the famine. (Akol 2007) • 50-60% of <5s malnourished (AFP 25th March) • In June, UNICEF survey found 61% of children malnourished of which 47% severely (Duffield, Young and others 1999 p. 57).
Panacier		• Reported to be one of the worst-affected locations in Bahr al-Ghazal by July 1998 (HCU 1998c)
Panliet	Gogrial	• Reported to be one of the worst-affected locations in Bahr al-Ghazal by July 1998 (HCU 1998c) • MSF set up supplementary and therapeutic feeding centres there in August 98, finding CMRs of about 5/10,000/day in August and 4/10,000/day in Sept (MSF Sudan 1998)
Panthou	Aweil East or Gogrial	• OLS recorded security evacuations of its staff on 28 Sep 96, 11 May 97, 14 May 98, 23 Jun 98 (UNICEF/OLS 1998b) • Attacked by Kerubino forces Jan 1997 (Deng 1999 p. 42) • A scene of rising malnutrition in mid-March (OLS 1998h) • 14th April Reuters film and article. MSF feeding 650 severely malnourished children. Less than 10% of children seen are normal weight-for-height (Dufka 1998) • April: World Vision cluster survey finds 14% of people in Panthou and Toch Payams severely wasted (Duffield, Young and others 1999 p. 56). • World Vision survey in mid-May finds serious malnutrition. • In May/June, the global malnutrition rate, at over 60% is among the worst in Bahr al-Ghazal measured by UNICEF. Attributed to lack of food. (HCU 1998c) • In early June it is experiencing an influx, with about 70 new admissions to under-5 feeding (run by MSF, supplied by UNICEF) per day. Militia raiding in the area. (Wynne-Jones 1998) • In July an MSF survey recorded a mortality rate of 24/10,000/day (Deng 1999 Table 4 p.16) • In August, the CMR among the displaced was surveyed as 21/10,000/day among the displaced and 1.5/10,000/day among the resident population, but the displaced were receiving less relief food. (Creusvaux 1998 cited in Jaspars, 1999 p. 10)
Panyok	Twic	• Site of a supplementary feeding centre run by SUPRAID with support from UK govt and Christian Aid (Collison 1998)
Rumbek town	Rumbek	• Town captured by the SPLM/A from GOS in May 1997. Approved as one of six destinations for relief flights from 19th March 1998. • Received displaced people from Wau and the Nuer border areas. • Received relief for about 20,000 people in late 1997, prompted by the perceptions of need by OXFAM (which, among other things, managed feeding centres in the area). Churches and CEAS-LWF were also operating in the area. • By the time of the next distribution (May) the population figure was taken to be 50,000 or 70,000. At the end of July, a relief population figure of 150,000 was agreed. • June: Oxfam cluster survey finds 50% of people malnourished, 18% severely(Duffield, Young and others 1999 p. 58).

Town/Village /Payam	County	Reported events and conditions
Thiekthou	Gogrial	• OLS recorded security evacuations of its staff, mid-1996 to mid-1998, on 16 Sep 96, 24 Apr 97, 28 Apr 97, 14 May 98, 3 Jun 98, 11 Jun 98 (UNICEF/OLS 1998b) • In mid-February, the condition of children was reported to be 'very bad', requiring establishment of supplementary feeding programme (OLS 1998g). • A scene of rising malnutrition in mid-March (OLS 1998h) • Reported to be one of the worst-affected locations in Bahr al-Ghazal by July 1998 (HCU 1998c) • MSF set up SFC and TFC there in Sept 98, finding CMRs of about 2/10,000/day (MSF Sudan 1998)
Thiet	Tonj	• OLS recorded security evacuations of its staff, on 23 May 97 (UNICEF/OLS 1998b). Bombed on 1 Mar 1998, killing 16 (Rone 1999 p. 91). • In August 98 and NGO operating a feeding centre complains that the lack of general food distribution reducing the effectiveness and admissions to the centre. A 'disturbingly high' mortality rate is observed around the feeding centre, attributed to disease, especially after the coming of the rains. Banditry, theft and looting is reported as a particular problem. (Task Force 1998)
Tieraliet	Aweil East	• MSF set up SFC and TFC there by Sept 98 (MSF Sudan 1998)
Toch	Gogrial	• April: World Vision survey finds 14% of population in Panthou and Toch Payams severely wasted (Duffield, Young and others 1999 p. 56).
Tonj	Tonj	• Town captured by the SPLM/A from GOS in June 1997 (Deng 1999 p. 42). • May 98: World Vision cluster survey finds 33% of people malnourished, 10% severely (Duffield, Young and others 1999 p. 58). • In August, it is found that displaced people have congregated there in hope of relief (needing both food and not food), but waiting in vain. (Task Force 1998)
	Tonj	• 50-60% of of under-5 children reported as malnourished (AFP 25th March)
Turalei	Twic	• OLS recorded four security evacuations of its staff during 1996 (UNICEF/OLS 1998b) • Scene of BBC broadcast by Martin Dawes, 7th April 1998, representing people heavily reliant on wildfoods (Dawes 1998b). • Attacked by *murahaleen* in early May. People fled to Wunrok, as did GOAL and WarChild (Beaumont 1998c)
Udici	Wau	• Devastated by PDF forces in Feb and Dec 1997 (Deng 1999 p. 42) • Many people were displaced from there to Acumcum (Task Force 1998)
Warawar	Aweil East	• Site of an important market linking GOS areas to the north and SPLM/A areas to the south. Burned by PDF forces July 1997 (Deng 1999 p. 42)
Wathmouk	Aweil East	• June: UNICEF rapid assessment survey finds 47% of people malnourished, 10% severely (Duffield, Young and others 1999 p. 57).
Wau	Wau	• See main text Section 2.4.
Wunrok	Twic	• OLS recorded security evacuations of its staff on 7 May 98, 2 Jun 98 (UNICEF/OLS 1998b)

Town/Village /Payam	County	Reported events and conditions
		• Received people displaced (by militia raiding) from Turalei in early May. Emaciated children. GOAL and War Child working there (Beaumont 1998c) • Massacre and child-stealing (perhaps more especially in Aweng) by PDF reported shortly afterwards (Beaumont 1998b) • June: UNICEF rapid assessment survey finds 53% of people malnourished, 14% severely (Duffield, Young and others 1999 p. 57).
Yirol	Yirol	• Town captured from GOS by SPLM/A in June 1997 (Deng 1999 p. 42(Task Force 1998 p. 57)) • Yirol, normally a food surplus area, had no NGO operation and no relief deliveries until May 1998, when Medair arrived and began a feeding centre. (Task Force 1998 p. 57) • In May, Medair cluster survey found 26% of people malnourished, 5% severely (Duffield, Young and others 1999 p. 58).

ANNEXE 2: CALCULATION OF DONATION RATES FOR DIAGRAM 2

Table 9: Calculation of donation rates for Diagram 2

ID letter	Information source	Period	Number of days (d)	Donation ($ thousands)			Av. rate of donation ($ thousands /day) (= i / d)
				Previous total (p)	New total (n)	Increment (i = n – p)	
B.	(AFP 1998b)	18th Feb – 3rd March	13	0*	3,160	3,160	243
C.	(WFP 1998q)	4th Mar – 3rd Apr	31	3,160	7,300	4,140	134
D.	See note *	4th Apr – 30th Apr	27	7,300	7,300 (?)*	0	0
E.	WFP (1998e)	1st May – 22nd May	22	0**	15,400	15,400	700
F.	WFP (1998g)	23rd May – 26th Jun	34	15,400	58,700	43,300	1,274
G.	WFP (1998j)	27th Jun – 31st Jul	35	58,700	116,000	57,300	1,637
H.	(USAID 1998a)	1st Aug – 6th Nov	98	116,000	150,000	34,000	347

Notes:

* The reported donations for periods B, C and D relate to contributions to WFP operations under the original Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal. The research uncovered no announcements of new donations for Period D, and the lack of them is broadly corroborated by an OCHA press release of 27th April (OCHA 1998c), which reports a current total of donations to the Appeal of $7.85 million, including money for non-WFP operations.

** The reported donations for periods E, F, G and H relate to the new WFP appeal for $65.8 million which it launched on 1st May 1998 (WFP 1998l). Totals of contributions announced against the new appeal apparently do not include those previously reported against the Consolidated Appeal, as the total of $13.9 million announced on 15th May includes $9.2 million announced by USAID at the end of April (WFP 1998d) which could not have been additional to the total of $7.3m reported on 3rd April (WFP 1998q).

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